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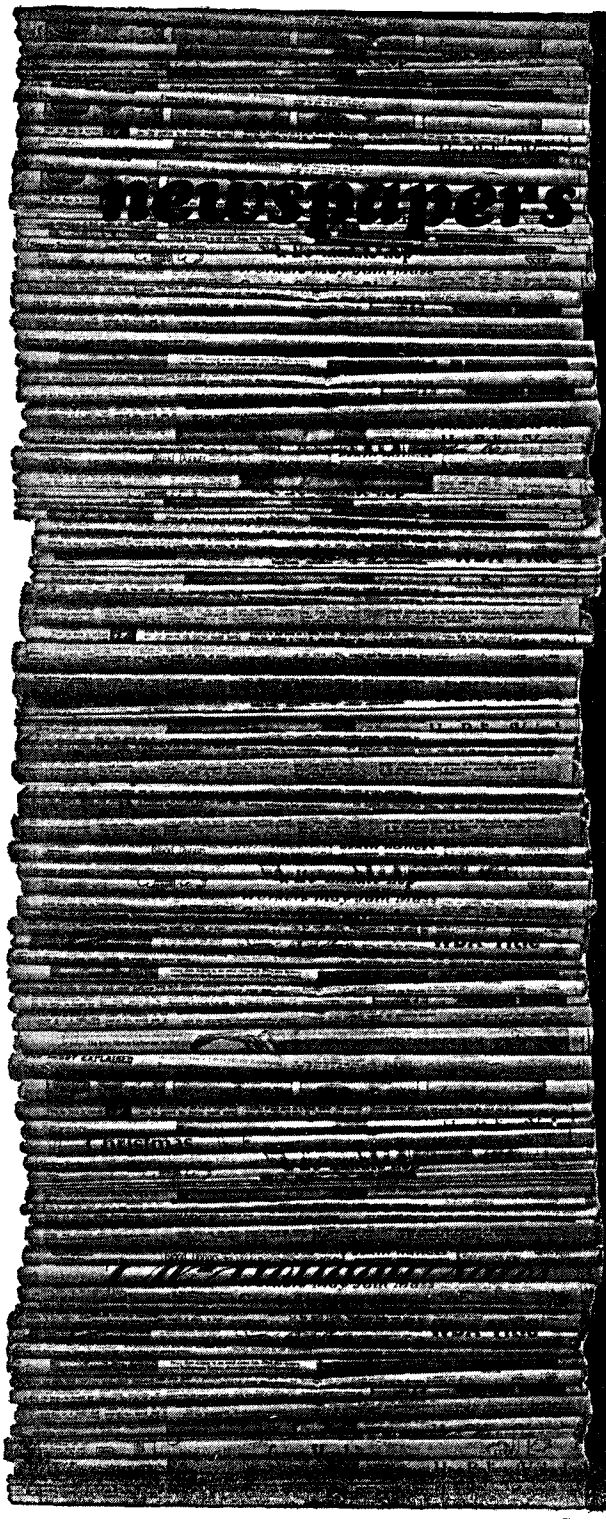

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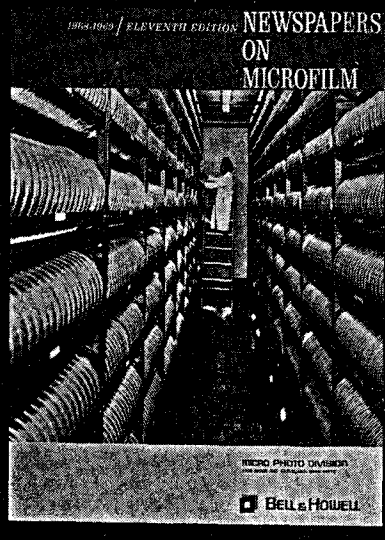

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THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR

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If You Don't Mind My Saying So . . . . .

JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH

Like many others inclined to melancholy, I have an insatiable appetite for jokes. And I say jokes rather than humor to indicate the inclusiveness of my taste. I relish everything from wit to slapstick; and if nothing else is available, I will listen to a string of those debased, mechanical, mass-produced and usually joyless artifacts known as gags. One out of fifty may make me laugh, and I am willing to wait for it. In that respect I am like Charles Lamb's friend who was so fond of poetry that he anticipated with impatience the publication of an enormous epic by a notoriously bad poet. "After all," he said, "in a composition of that length there are bound to be a few good lines." His optimism was admirable, but probably as doomed to disappointment as mine usually is.

Once only kings and members of the upper nobility could afford a court jester. Now television has brought a dozen into nearly every home. And so far as I can judge from the surviving specimens of the old professionals (including Shakespeare's), their average was no higher than the average of those who come to me between commercials. Bob Hope himself couldn't get a laugh out of a U.S.O. audience with a pun as clumsy and incomplete as "that most capricious poet Ovid among the Goths."

My memory—not remarkable in any other respect—is phenomenal if a joke of any kind is involved. Let me hear even a mere wisecrack, and it is instantaneously integrated into the pattern of my synapses, to remain there ready to be called forth when conversation introduces the proper punch card into my computer. I can still tell jokes I heard before I had learned to read, and, what is sometimes worse, I do. Sometimes, I say, because quite good jokes heard that long ago may have been out of circulation for so long that only those few surviving persons as old or older than I am have ever heard them.

Logan Pearsall Smith confessed that neither philosophy nor religion had ever reconciled him to the thought of death. Nevertheless, he did get comfort from the magnificent things the great writers had said about it. I know what he meant. And in some connection or other I once quoted in this department my own favorite example of man's ability to speak bravely "even in the infamy of his nature": "The bright day is done and we are for the dark." But I think I should prefer to go out laughing, not at death itself but at something irrelevantly funny enough to make me forget it.

I know that my kind of memory is dangerous because, as someone before me has said, it is likely to fail in one respect. We remember all the details of an incident or an anecdote but forget the fact that we have told it to the same person at least once before. Notoriously, there are some hearers so excessively polite that they will not take advantage of the halfhearted preliminary, "Tell me if you have heard this one." On the other hand, there are others who just never remember a joke—not because they have no sense of humor, but because it rises and dies in them so quickly that the occasion that momentarily provoked it leaves no record of itself behind. People like that are naturally much frequented and appreciated by chronic re-

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tellers of other people's jests. It is, moreover, a comfort to remember that even today there are children who have not yet heard, "Who was that lady I seen you with last night?" or "Ain't nobody here 'cept us chickens." Only later will they learn what was, in my childhood, the crushing retort to the teller of too stale a chestnut: "First time I heard that one I laughed so loud I kicked the slats out of my crib."

I have never been satisfied with any of the various theories that attempt to define the laughable in such a way that the definition will be applicable to every comic situation or remark. Incongruity, surprise, self-criticism, aggressiveness, taboo-breaking, and so forth: all are characteristic of some comic situations or remarks. The best jokes and the wittiest replies seem to combine several of them. But I have never been satisfied that any one or any combination of recognizable ingredients can be made into a formula that will fit every laugh-provoking situation, retort or obiter dictum.

It may be that one should not inquire too closely. In Johnson's *Rasselas,* a philosopher constantly concerned to discover the reasons for things finds himself unaccustomedly happy. Presently he discovers the explanation, but loses the happiness—which, so he realized too late, was the result of the fact that for once he was not trying to find the reason for anything. Perhaps that suggests why discourses on the nature of comedy from Aristotle through Congreve to Bergson and Freud are sometimes interesting but never funny. When we think we have found the explanation, laughter ceases. If that is all there is to it, what seemed gloriously funny isn't funny anymore.

At first sight the most unattractive of theories is that which sees in the smile only a human equivalent of the ape's bared teeth and in laughter only an animal's snarl. But the theory can be made to account for a good many things. Voltaire's "Man is the only animal who laughs, drinks when he isn't thirsty, and makes love all the year around" is only one of the many ways of recognizing that what we call laughter is so exclusively a human phenomenon that pet animals are often visibly distressed by it as by something incomprehensible and probably threatening. And although some animals (especially the more intelligent ones) can be mischievous and even capable of something very close to the practical joke, they seem no more capable of any higher form of humor than they are of conceptual thinking. But if you believe—as I do, and as I think everyone who takes for granted that man is the product of his evolution should believe—that all of man's seeming uniqueness must have evolved from something cruder and simpler in prehuman nature, then you must look for something that has in its primitive form a characteristic of humor; and the snarl does suggest itself.

In all but the most refined forms of humor the aggressive element is obvious. And the vast majority of even civilized jokes are *against* somebody or something. We no longer laugh (as some people are said to do) at excruciating pain or a fatal accident. Presumably we have developed barely enough compassion to refrain from doing so. But the dentist's chair and seasickness are favorite subjects for humor just because, so I suppose, we give ourselves the excuse that they don't last very long and are not fatal. And if even the smile really is descended from an ancient snarl, nevertheless the highest manifestations of a sense of humor have been sublimated in the course of evolution at least as much as (so we hope) some of the other human characteristics that have their unmistakable origins in animal reactions.

G. K. Chesterton's theory was that all humor depends on our sense of the dual nature of man, of the contrast between the dignity of his spirit and the indignities to which his physical body is subjected. When a horse falls on the street, we do not, he said, laugh. But when a man takes a tumble we do—at the sight of the son of God slipping on a banana peel. It is a sharp observation, but the explanation does not fit all cases. When a humorous situation or comment is neither in the nature of a sim-

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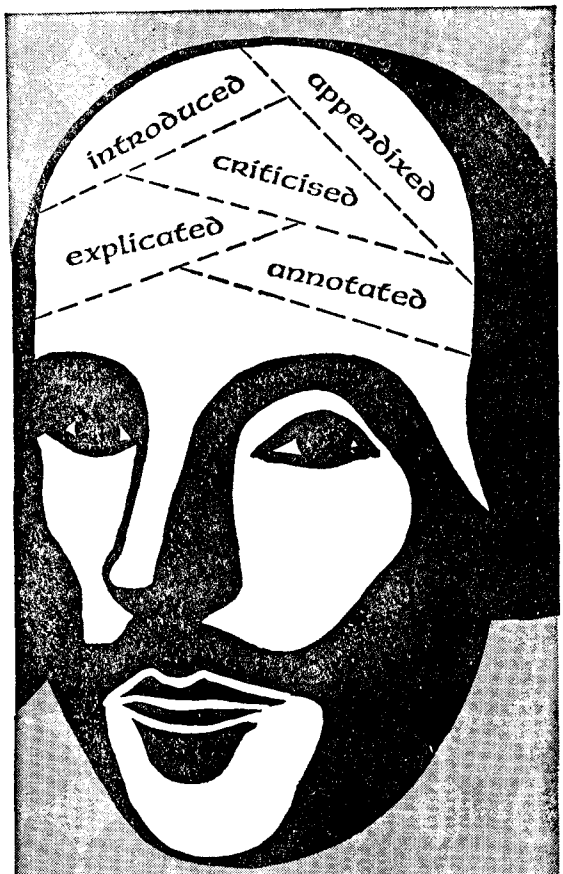

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ple practical joke nor, like satire, an aggression against some person, some habit or some belief, then I think the victim is usually either the speaker himself or the whole human race to which he belongs. Self-criticism is the highest form of criticism, and we are ourselves the target of our best jokes.

There remains the hard problem of the relation of humor to good morals, good sense and good manners. Percy Bysshe Shelley, after puzzling for a long time over *The School for Scandal,* announced that he now understood for the first time what was meant by "comedy." It consists, so he concluded, in holding a scamp like Charles Surface up for admiration while ridiculing a virtuous man like his brother Joseph. But it can't be quite as simple as that. Satire is usually on the side of conventional judgment; wit of another kind is generally what has been called "the kiss to common sense behind the back of respectability."

Bernard Shaw once spoke of "that power of acute observation," which is sometimes called by those who do not have it "cynicism." And, in fact, the distinction between comic realism on the one hand and sheer cynicism on the other is often a fine one. When Samuel Johnson says that all self-display is a form of boasting because it is intended to suggest how much we may safely grant against ourselves, that is merely "acute observation." H. L. Mencken's "conscience is that still small voice which whispers 'somebody may be looking' " may cross the line into cynicism, while Ed Howe's remark that the best defense against temptation is fear ceases to be funny partly because it stays on the right side of it.

It is said that when Talleyrand was greeted by Louis Philippe with "I am suffering the tortures of the damned," he replied with a lifted eyebrow, "Already?" The cruelty, if not the wit, of even this was exceeded by one of the notorious Mizners, who telegraphed from Florida to his brother mortally ill in a New York hospital: "Stop dying. I am trying to write a comedy." On the other hand, when Antoine de Rivarol met on the street a notoriously bad poet whose coat pocket was bulging with manuscripts and when he exclaimed, "You ought not to go about like that; you might be robbed—by someone who didn't know who you were," the surprise of the last sentence is so refreshing that we are perfectly willing to accept the discomfiture of the unfortunate victim.

The technique of wit, as distinguished from its content, depends so much upon surprise and upon implication that if I ever get around to setting forth in some appropriate place (assuming that there is any such) my own complete theory of humor, comedy and the joke, the distinction between content and technique will be very important, and I shall maintain that every successful joke or witticism is marked by at least one or, preferably, several of the following characteristics of content and technique: it is against somebody, even if that somebody happens to be the teller; it breaks some taboo that respectability defends; the point suddenly reveals itself; the point is made by implication rather than direct statement. Rivarol's address to the poet is certainly against somebody, and the point is revealed suddenly. Moreover, it would not be either witty or funny, if he had said something like, "This display of manuscript would be dangerous if you were not such a bad poet," instead of, "You might be robbed—by somebody who didn't know who you were."

For another example of something witty only because the point is implied rather than stated consider this, which I heard for the first time only a few weeks ago. At table one of the guests objected that he couldn't hear the blessing being pronounced by a clergyman, and he got the reply, "I wasn't talking to you." Obviously, if the reply had been something like, "But God can," that would have been merely priggishly pietistic. But, to me at least, "I wasn't talking to you" is witty.

I have already got much deeper into the subject than I meant to go when I began what I intend to be only a collection of other men's jokes. Instead of getting in

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any deeper I shall first ask readers to ponder three of Groucho Marx's best-remembered gags and to see how different they really are from one another, especially in the extent to which they have intellectual content. Finally, I shall retell an anecdote that I believe to be both funny and less well known than it should be. But the gags are first.

(A) When one of Groucho's brothers announced, "The garbageman is here," Groucho replied, "Tell him we don't want any."

(B) When another brother, taking the part of a stranger, said, "I should like to say good-bye to your wife," Groucho replied, "Who wouldn't?"

(C) Responding to an invitation to join a certain club, he declined in these words: "I do not care to belong to any club that would want me as a member."

The first of these gags is merely nonsense that sounds bewilderingly logical. The second is merely another variation on an eternal theme. But the third is a comment on the paradoxes of snobbism and status-seeking that neither La Rochefoucauld nor any other moralist ever put better.

Now for the anecdote. It is humor rather than wit, because it depends upon a revelation of character and it embodies also a comment on the human weakness for exculpation. A lawyer with an extensive practice in rural Tennessee passed it on to me, and if, so far as I know, it has never been either printed or told publicly, this may possibly be because it really is not a gag but a piece of veracious reporting.

Two hillbilly families lived a mile apart and were intimate friends. When the husband of one died, the other husband got in the habit of walking over to comfort the widow, sometimes with a mess of beans or a ham hock. After this had been going on for six or seven months, his wife exclaimed to him when he returned one evening: "Say, have you heard that the Widow Tolliver is a-goin' to have a baby?" "Yeah," he said, "And they tell me she is a-goin' to blame it on us."

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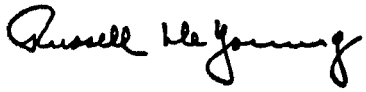

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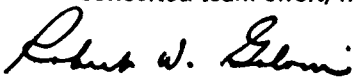

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Behavior Patterns of Scientists

ROBERT K. MERTON

THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE indelibly records 1953 as the year in which the structure of the DNA molecule was discovered. But it is 1968 that will probably emerge as the year of the double helix in the history that treats the behavior of scientists, for James Watson's deeply personal account of that discovery, now in its ninth printing, has evidently seized the public imagination. Widely and diversely reviewed in journals of science and parascience, it has been discussed in scores of monthlies, weeklies and daily newspapers, from the London *Times* to the Erie, Pennsylvania, *Times,* from the *Village Voice* to the *Wall Street Journal* (which, aptly enough, manages to give a faintly financial slant to the book, concluding that "Watson, in the long run, may have done science a favor. In these days when the public is asked to allocate billions for scientific research, it's of some comfort to know that the spenders are human.").

To judge from the popular reviews, that indeed was taken to be the essential message of the book: scientists are human, after all. This phrasing, it turns out, does not mean that scientists can be assigned at long last to the species Homo sapiens. Many Americans and some Englishmen were apparently prepared to entertain that serviceable hypothesis even before the appearance of *The Double Helix.* Evidently, what is meant by the Watson-induced thought that scientists too are human is that scientists are all too human; that, in the succinct jaundiced words of the St. Louis *Post-*

ROBERT K. MERTON, Giddings Professor of Sociology at Columbia University, is author of *Social Theory and Social Structure, On the Shoulders of Giants* and *Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England.* He presented this annual Phi Beta Kappa-Sigma Xi address before the American Association for the Advancement of Science in December, 1968.

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Dispatch, "they can be boastful, jealous, garrulous, violent, [and even] stupid. . . ."

What, then, are the stories Watson tells about the social and intellectual interactions that entered into the discovery, stories eliciting the popular response that scientists are all too human? Above all else, he tells of the race for priority; a close awareness of the champion rival who must be defeated in this contest of minds; a driving insistence on getting needed data from sometimes reluctant, sometimes inadvertent collaborators; a competition for specific discoveries over the years between the Cavendish and Caltech; an allegedly English sense of private domains for scientific investigation that bear no-poaching signs; an express ambition for that ultimate symbol of accomplishment, the Nobel. He tells, too, about alternating periods of intense thought and almost calculated idleness (while the gestation of ideas pursues its course); about false starts and errors of inference; about quickly getting up needed scientific knowledge despite an impressive inventory of initial ignorance; about the complementarity of talents, skills and character-structure of the symbiotic collaborators; about an unfailing sense for the key problem, and an intuitive and stubbornly maintained imagery of the nature of its solution, together with the implications as these were expressed in that masterstroke of calculated understatement wrought by Francis Crick: "It has not escaped our notice that the pairing we have postulated immediately suggests a possible copying mechanism for the genetic material."

The stories detailed in *The Double Helix* have evidently gone far to dispel a popular mythology about the complex behavior of scientists. That this response should have occurred among the public at large is not surprising. Embodying as they do some of the prime values of world civilization, scientists have long been placed on pedestals where they may have no wish to be perched—not, at least, the more thoughtful among them. This is not the result of a conspiracy, not even a conspiracy of goodwill. It is only that men and women of science have long been pictured, through collective acts of piety, as though they were more than human, being like gods in their creativity, and also as less than human, being deprived in their work of the passions, attitudes and social ties

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given to ordinary men. As a result, scientists have been dehumanized in the public mind by being idealized and, on occasion, idolized. Contributing greatly to this centuries-long process of distortion are the pious biographers who, in sapless prose, convert indubitably great men of science into what Augustus de Morgan once described as "monsters of perfection."

In part, too, the imagery of scientists moving coolly, methodically and unerringly to the results they report may stem from the etiquette that governs the writing of scientific papers. This etiquette, as we know, requires them to be works of vast expurgation, stripping the complex events and behaviors that culminated in the report of everything except their cognitive substance. Compare only the lean, taut, almost laconic, nine-hundred-word article that appeared in *Nature* that momentous April in 1953 with the tangled web of events reported in Watson's forty-thousand-word account of the same discovery.

The sense of popular revelation upon learning that scientists are actually human testifies, then, to the prevalence of an earlier belief to the contrary. Ironically enough, that older mythology now threatens to be displaced by a somewhat new variant, expressed in responses to the Watson memoir by scientists and humanists alike. (I use the term mythology in its decidedly untechnical sense to denote a set of ill-founded beliefs held uncritically by an interested group.) The new variant has several interrelated components. The patterns of motives and behavior set out in Watson's irreverent, naturalistic narrative are held to be distinctive of the newest era of science, staffed by "a new kind of scientist and one that could hardly have been thought of before science became a mass occupation." Only in our highly competitive age, allegedly, are appreciable numbers of scientists concerned to "scoop" others at work in the field and so to gain recognition for their accomplishments. As another scientist-reviewer sees it, part of what Watson reports is an expression of "no more than the general opportunism that is the hallmark of modern competitive science"—a statement in which the governing phrase is "*modern* competitive science." And in still another version, this one the response of a humanist to *The Double Helix*, it is suggested, with unconcealed reluctance,

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that "a keenness of early recognition may even be, these days, as essential to discovery as intelligence. Science, like all other activities *now*"—again, I accent the temporal qualifier—"is crowded and accelerated. There is no sitting alone *anymore* and letting apples fall down."

There is a certain plausibility to this view that the mores of science and the behavior of scientists must surely have changed in the recent past. For plainly, all the basic demographic, social, economic, political and organizational parameters of science have acquired dramatically new values. The size of the population of working scientists has increased exponentially from the scattered hundreds three centuries ago to the hundred or more myriads today. The time of the amateur is long since past; scientists are now professionals all, their work providing them with a livelihood and, for some, a not altogether impoverished one. The social organization of scientific inquiry has greatly changed, with collaboration and research teams the order of the day. As just another pale reflection of this changed organization of scientific inquiry, each decade registers more and more multi-authored articles in decided contrast to the almost unchanging character of single-authored papers in the humanities. The monumental budgets assigned to science—although never large enough, as all of us know—are orders of magnitude greater than the straitened budgets of only a few generations ago, to say nothing of the immense contrast with those of the more remote past. The vast increase in numbers of scientists and in funds for science practically dictates the exponential increase in the quantity of published research. As science has become more institutionalized, it has also become more intimately interrelated with the other institutions of society. Science-based technologies and the partial diffusion of a scientific outlook have become great social forces that move our history and greatly affect the relations obtaining between the nations of the world. Scientists do not, of course, make the major political decisions, but they now affect them significantly. The Szilard-Einstein letter to the President, for example, would be described by some as one of the most consequential communications in recorded history.

But it would only strain your patience to continue with this

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truncated list of particulars in which science today so conspicuously departs from the science of an earlier time. With all these profound changes, as any sociologist is apt to tell you if you give him half a chance, there must also be a new ethos of science abroad, a new set of values and institutionally patterned motives. And, as I have noted, practicing scientists in biology and physics and chemistry have indeed suggested that we now have a new breed of scientists, actuated by new motives, oriented to the main chance, and gravely agitated by failures to achieve. Like other men, scientists become disturbed by the panhuman problem of evil, in which, to assume the language of Gilbert Murray, "the fortunes of men seem to bear practically no relation to their merits and efforts."

Without at all adopting the new mythology of science, the psychiatrist Lawrence Kubie notes that young scientists, unwarned that "their future success may be determined by forces which are outside their own creative capacity or their willingness to work hard" may suffer "a new psychosocial ailment . . . which may not be wholly unrelated to the gangster tradition of dead-end kids." And he goes on to ask: "Are we witnessing the development of a generation of hardened, cynical, amoral, embittered, disillusioned young scientists?"

The question is not unrelated to the new mythology which maintains that behavior of the kind candidly described by Watson is something new to our time, and so, we must suppose, altogether alien to the earlier, heroic age of science since, say, the seventeenth century. It is an intriguing and, as I have said, not altogether implausible thought, one that the rest of this paper is designed to examine.

And here I must interrupt these introductory observations with a personal confession. It was just thirty years ago that I suggested in a footnote tucked away in a monograph on science in seventeenth-century England that the race for priority might constitute a strategic subject for study and might provide clues to ways in which the institution of science shapes the motives, passions and social relations of scientists. So far as I can tell, the youthful author of that footnote proved to be its only reader. At any rate, no one, not even he, harkened to the muted clarion call. Some ten years ago,

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when addressing a captive audience of a thousand sociologists, I tried to make amends for this lapse of two decades and examined the import of priority races for an understanding of both the institution of science and the behavior of scientists. In more recent years, my colleagues at Columbia and I have examined these implications in a series of investigations. In what follows, I shall draw mercilessly upon these inquiries.*

Now to return to the belief system that regards the rough-and-tumble of contest and competition in science as peculiar to our own deteriorating times, that treats such contest as inevitably self-aggrandizing and takes the drive to be first in reaching a discovery as necessarily displacing that "relish of knowledge" (of which John Locke spoke), as doing away with intrinsic joy in discovery or pleasure in the beauty of a powerful simplifying idea.

As with most mythologies, this one is not altogether out of touch with the world of everyday experience. Although it may have surprised the outsider, Watson's unabashed report on the race for priority scarcely came as news to his fellow-scientists. They know from hard-won experience that multiple independent discoveries at about the same time constitute one of their occupational hazards. They not only know it, but often act on that premise. That the consequent rush to achieve priority is common in our time hardly needs documentation. The evidence is there on every side. A few years before Watson reached his much wider audience, Arthur Schawlow casually noted in the public prints that Charles Townes and he had been "in a hurry, of course. We feared that it might be only a matter of time before others would come up with the same idea. So we decided to publish before building a working model. . . . Subsequently, Theodore Maiman won the frantic race between many experimenters to build the first laser. Our theory was verified." Townes had ample biographical reason

* R. K. Merton, "Priorities in scientific discovery," *American Sociological Review*, December, 1957, Vol. 22, 635–659; "Singletons and multiples in scientific discovery," *Proceedings* of the American Philosophical Society, October, 1961, Vol. 105, 470–486; "The ambivalence of scientists," *Bulletin of the Johns Hopkins Hospital*, 1963, Vol. 112, 77–97; "Resistance to the systematic study of multiple discoveries in science," *European Journal of Sociology*, 1963, iv, 237–282; *On the Shoulders of Giants* (New York: The Free Press, 1965; Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967); "The Matthew effect in science," *Science*, January 5, 1968, Vol. 159, 56–63. This work has been supported, in part, by the National Science Foundation and by the Columbia University Institute for the Study of Science in Human Affairs.

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to be in a hurry. After all, in the early 1950's, he had been involved in that fivefold independent discovery of the maser, along with Willis Lamb, Joseph Weber, Nikolai Basov and Aleksandr Prokhorov.

The contemporary annals of science are peppered with cases of scientists spurred on to more intense effort by the knowledge that others were on much the same track. Harriet Zuckerman's interviews with Nobel laureates find many of them testifying, in the words of one of them, that "it was bound to happen soon. Had I not done it, . . . it was there, waiting for somebody . . . [probably] at the Rockefeller Institute." Or to turn from the moving frontiers of science to its interior regions, Warren Hagstrom found that two-thirds of a sample of some fourteen hundred scientists had been anticipated by others in their own contributions, a good number of these on more than one occasion. And, if there were need of any further sign that contemporary scientists are often engaged in the race for priority, we need only turn to the periodic editorials by Samuel Goudsmit in the *Physical Review Letters,* where he notes the drive for quick publication to ensure priority, sometimes at the expense of physicists "working along the same lines who want to do a more complete job before publishing their findings." Some of his editorials are touched with anguish as he reviews expedients adopted by physicists seeking publication in the *Letters* in order to " 'scoop' a competitor who has already submitted a full article" or by some who use the newspapers for the first announcement of their findings or ideas.

On every side, then, there is evidence that some unknown proportions of contemporary scientists are actively engaged in trying to get there first. The fact is a commonplace. But does the fact warrant the inference, drawn in the emerging mythology, that intense competition for discovery is in a significant sense distinctive of the new era of science, with its enlarged population of scientists, its grants, prizes and professional rewards? I think not. This component of the mythology is the result of parochial perception. It emerges from the simple expedient of not looking at what there is to see throughout the centuries of modern science. It is a mythology achieved by emasculating the history of that science.

For the plain fact is, of course, that the race for priority has

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been frequent throughout the entire era of modern science. Moving back only a generation or so, we observe the good-natured race between Hahn and Boltwood, for example, to discover the "parent of radium" which Boltwood was able to find first, just as, when Hahn discovered mesothorium, Boltwood acknowledged his having been outdistanced, saying only, "I was almost there myself. . ." There is Ramsay telegraphing Berthelot in Paris "at once" about his isolation of helium; writing Rayleigh to the same effect and sending a note to the Royal Society to establish priority, just as he and Travers were to announce having nosed out Dewar in the discovery of neon. There is the forthright account by Norbert Wiener of the race between Bouligand and himself in potential theory, making Wiener "aware that he must hurry," but having it end in a "dead heat" since Bouligand had submitted his "results to the [French] Academy in a sealed envelope," just a day before Wiener had gotten off a short note for publication in the *Comptes Rendus*.

At this time, with the epochal voyage to the moon just concluded, we can scarcely forget the race run by the technologist Robert Goddard, the American father of the rocket, to achieve "primacy in outer space," when, after 1923, he was spurred on by the "journalistic claims to priority then made by the German partisans of Hermann Oberth . . . to redouble his efforts" and to launch his first liquid-propellant rocket only three years later.

In this respect the behavior of scientists does not much vary, transcending differences of time and national culture. Peter Kapitza puts it all in the of-course mood as he describes the behavior of Lomonosov, the father of Russian science, saying: "No less importance was attached to priority in scientific work at that time than now." Of this, Lomonosov and his colleagues provide dramatic evidence. When the physicist Richman was killed by lightning in 1763, the Russian Academy of Sciences canceled its general meeting, only to have Lomonosov ask that he nevertheless be given the opportunity to present his paper on electricity, "lest," in his words, "it lose novelty." The president of the Academy saw the point and arranged for a special meeting in order, as he explained, "that gospodin Lomonosov should not be late with his

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own new productions among scientific people in Europa, and his paper thereby be lost in electrical experiments made meanwhile."

The fact is that almost all of those firmly placed in the pantheon of science—Newton, Descartes, Leibniz, Pascal or Huyghens, Lister, Faraday, Laplace or Davy—were caught up in passionate efforts to achieve priority and to have it publicly registered. Consider only a highly condensed account of how things stood with Newton. Now, I do not undertake to compare Newton and Watson in terms of their nature-given talents or their society-nurtured accomplishments. Such comparison would be not merely odious but downright foolish. But when we are told that the aggressive, prize-seeking, competitive and pathbreaking behavior of Watson is something new unleashed in the mid-twentieth-century world of science, there is some point in examining the apposite behavior of the seventeenth-century giant of science. One incidental similarity of bare chronology is trivial enough to require no more than passing mention. They were both in their golden years, decidedly young men. Just as Jim Watson took up the problem he made his own in his twenty-third year, so we will remember, from Newton's own account, the *annus mirabilis* when at twenty-three or twenty-four he discovered the binomial theorem, started work toward invention of the calculus, took his first steps toward establishing the law of universal gravitation, and began his experiments on optics.

Long after he had made these incomparable contributions to mathematics and physical science, Newton was still busily engaged in ensuring the luster and fame owing him. He was not merely concerned with establishing his priority but was periodically obsessed by it. He developed a corps of young mathematicians and astronomers, such as Roger Cotes, David Gregory, William Whiston, John Keill and, above all, Edmond Halley, "for the energetic building of his fame" (as the historian Frank Manuel has put it in his recent *Portrait of Isaac Newton*). Newton's voluminous manuscripts contain at least twelve versions of a defense of his priority, as against Leibniz, in the invention of the calculus. Toward the end, Newton, then president of the Royal Society, appointed a committee to adjudicate the rival claims of Leibniz and himself, packed the committee with his adherents, directed its every activ-

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ity, anonymously wrote the preface for the second published report on the controversy—the draft is in his handwriting—and included in that preface a disarming reference to the legal adage that "no one is a proper witness for himself and [that] he would be an iniquitous Judge, and would crush underfoot the laws of all the people, who would admit anyone as a witness in his own cause." We can gauge the pressures for establishing his unique priority that must have operated for Newton to adopt such means for defense of his claims. As I shall presently suggest, this was not so much because Newton was weak as because the newly institutionalized value set upon originality in science was so great that he found himself driven to these lengths.

By comparison, Watson's passing account of a priority-skirmish within the Cavendish itself can only be described as tame and evenhanded, almost magnanimous. That conflict largely testified to the ambiguous origins of ideas generated in the course of interaction between colleagues, touched, perhaps, with a bit of cryptomnesia.

For those who believe that the Watson memoir expresses a new and extreme drive for getting there first in science, the antidote will be found in reading the *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society for January and February 1715, devoted almost entirely to the angry quest for priority of Newton over Leibniz. And those who consider that Watson's account converts science into an arena for spectator sport, new or peculiar to our time, have something to learn from the observation by Frank Manuel that

> Two of the greatest geniuses of the European world, not only of their own time, but of its whole long history, had been privately belaboring each other with injurious epithets and encouraging their partisans to publish scurrilous innuendoes in learned journals. In the age of reason they behaved like gladiators in a Roman circus. Here were two old bachelors, Leibniz not far from death, Newton with a decade more of life, each fighting for exclusive possession of his brainchild, the right to call the invention of the calculus his own and no one else's.

The peerless Newton had also fought periodic battles with Robert Hooke over priority in optics and celestial mechanics that again showed him at his gladiatorial best. He claimed Hooke

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to be alternately a fool and a charlatan, the first in not understanding some elementary matters of optics and the second in stealing some ideas from "Faber, in his dialogue *De Lumine,* who had it from Grimaldi." When, just after publication of the *Principia,* Halley informed Newton of Hooke's claim to some essentials in the law of gravitation, Newton once again seized upon this tactic of *tu quoque,* writing:

> I am told by one who had it from another lately present at one of your meetings [of the Royal Society] how that Mr. Hooke should there make a great stir, pretending that I had it all from him, and desiring they would see that he had justice done him. This carriage toward me is very strange and undeserved; so that I cannot forbear in stating the point of justice, to tell you further, that he has published Borell[i]'s hypothesis in his own name; and the asserting of this to himself and completing it as his own, seems to me the ground of all the stir he makes.

Here, then, is one pattern that repeats itself through the centuries of modern science. Two or more scientists quietly announce a discovery. Since it is often the case that these are truly independent contributions, with each scientist having exhibited originality of mind, the process is sometimes stabilized at that point. But as the behavior of Newton, Leibniz, Hooke and an indefinitely large number of other scientists testifies, this peaceful acceptance of the fact of independent discovery does not always occur. Since the situation is often ambiguous, with the role of each scientist not easy to identify, and since each one *knows* that he had himself arrived at the discovery, and since the institutionalized stakes of reputation are high and the joy of acknowledged discovery immense, this militates against mutual acknowledgment of a parallel contribution. One or another of the discoverers—or, often, his colleagues or fellow nationals—suggests that he rather than the rival was really first, and that the independence of his rival is at least unproved. Then begins the familiar deterioration of standards governing conflictful interaction. The other side, grouping their forces, counter with the opinion that plagiary had indeed occurred, that let him whom the shoe fits wear it and, furthermore, to make matters quite clear, the shoe is on the

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other's foot. Reinforced by group loyalties and sometimes by ethnocentrism, the controversy gains force, mutual charges of plagiary abound and there develops an atmosphere of thoroughgoing hostility and mutual distrust.

It is symbolically fitting that the man who arranged for the recognition in perpetuity of major scientific accomplishments, which are often cases of acknowledged multiple discovery or of barely established priority, should himself have been engaged in a struggle over priority of technological invention. For it happens that the Maecenas who established these prizes—Alfred Nobel himself—was deeply involved in a battle with Frederick Abel and James Dewar over the invention of smokeless, nitroglycerin gunpowder. The documentation of this particular scrap "fills several yards of shelves in the Nobel Foundation's archives." And it was small comfort to the agitated Nobel to have the Lord Justice, compelled on technical grounds not to find for Nobel, borrowing and adapting the aphorism made famous by Newton when he declared that "it is obvious that a dwarf who has been allowed to climb up on the back of a giant [the giant being Nobel, of course] can see farther than the giant himself." Nobel's frustrations and resentment over having been deprived of his intellectual property were only slightly siphoned off in his play, *The Patent Bacillus,* which lampooned the British court system.

This sampling of historical evidence is perhaps enough to put into question the belief that science today is competitive to a degree unknown before. If there has been a change in this aspect of the ethos of science, it seems to be of quite another kind. Scientists have apparently become more fully aware that, with growing numbers at work in each special field, any discovery is apt to be made by others as well as themselves, and so are less often apt than before to assume that parallel discoveries must be borrowed ones. Among the multitude of multiple discoveries in the history of science, Elinor Barber and I have examined a sample of two hundred and sixty-four in detail and have found, among other things, that there is a secular decline in the frequency with which multiples are an occasion for intense priority-conflicts. Of the thirty-six multiples before 1700 that we have examined, ninety-

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two percent were strenuously contested; the figure drops to seventy-two percent in the eighteenth century; remains at about the same level in the first half of the nineteenth century and declines to fifty-nine percent in the second half, reaching the lowest level of thirty-three percent in the first half of this century. Perhaps the culture of science today is not so pathogenic as it once was.

The absence of historical perspective marks another component of the new mythology of science. This one holds that quick, if not premature, publication to ensure priority is peculiar to our new breed of scientists, as witness the manuscript that went off to the editors of *Nature* on that fateful April 2nd of 1953. Again, it will do no harm to examine this opinion from a sociological and historical perspective. Today as yesterday, scientists are caught up in one of the many ambivalent precepts contained in the institution of science. This one requires that the scientist must be ready to make his newfound knowledge available to his peers as soon as possible *but* he must avoid an undue tendency to rush into print. (Compare Faraday's motto: "Work, Finish, Publish" with Ehrlich's *"Viel arbeiten, wenig publizieren!")* To see this in fitting historical context, we must remember that the first scientific journals confronted not an excess but a deficiency of manuscripts meriting publication. The problem did not arise merely from the small number of men at work in science. There was the further restraint that the value set upon the open disclosure of one's scientific work was far from universally accepted. Intent upon safeguarding their intellectual property, many men of science in the seventeenth century set a premium upon secrecy (as is evident from their correspondence with close associates).

To convert this motivated secrecy into motivated free disclosure, Henry Oldenburg, the first editor of the *Philosophical Transactions,* introduced an expedient for maintaining property rights through prompt publication. In this way, the contributor would be assured his priority. We see the effectiveness of this socially patterned motivation beautifully exemplified in the case of Robert Boyle who, like others of his time, was chronically and acutely anxious about the danger of what he described as "philosophical robbery"—what would be less picturesquely described today as

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pilfering from circulated but unpublished manuscripts. Boyle felt that he had often been so victimized. But now, the editor Oldenburg could assure Boyle and others that their priority rights would be guarded as never before. Exceedingly prompt publication in the *Transactions* would take care of that. As Oldenburg wrote Boyle about his perennially "lost papers": "They are now very safe, and will be within this week in print, as [the printer] Mr. Crook assureth, who will also take care of keeping ym unexposed to ye eye of a Philosophical Robber." Thus, from its very beginning, the journal of science introduced the institutional device of quick publication to motivate men of science to replace the value set upon secrecy with the value placed upon the open disclosure of the knowledge they had created (a value that, in our own time, has often acquired, through the displacement of goals, a spurious emphasis on publication for its own sake, almost irrespective of the merit of what is published). The concern with getting into print fast is scarcely confined to contemporary science.

Watson fluttered the dovecotes of academia, to say nothing of the wider reading public, by telling us of having joined with Crick in an enthusiastic toast "to the Pauling failure . . . Though the odds still appeared against us, Linus had not yet won his Nobel." Once again, it seems, Watson had violated the mores that govern contest behavior in science and the public disclosure of that behavior. Yet seen in historical perspective, how mild and restrained is this episode by comparison with judgments on contemporaries set out in public by great scientists of the heroic past. There is Galileo becoming a seasoned campaigner as he flays one Grassi who "tried to diminish whatever praise there may be in this [invention of the telescope] which belongs to me." Galileo then goes on to assail others who "attempted to rob me of that glory which was mine, pretending not to have seen my writings and trying to represent themselves as the original discoverer of these marvels." Or finally, Galileo says of another that he "had the gall to claim that he had observed the Medicean planets . . . before I had [and used] a sly way of attempting to establish his priority."

For all of us who harbor the ideal image of our role-models among great scientists of the past it can only be disconcerting to

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have Edmond Halley forthrightly described by the first Astronomer Royal, John Flamsteed, as a "lazy and malicious thief" who manages to be just as "lazy and slothful as he is corrupt." Or to have Flamsteed assert that he found Newton "always insidious, ambitious, and excessively covetous of praise."

As we approach our own day, we hear only a muted echo of these angry and agitated words reverberating through the corridors of the peaceful temple of science. Since some of these episodes involve our contemporaries and often our associates, they become, we must suppose, painful to observe and more difficult to analyze with detachment. Even the social scientists who may not be directly involved in these episodes, at least for the moment, feel acutely uncomfortable. Uneasy and distressed, they can hardly bring themselves to study this behavior. Even to assemble the facts of the case is to be charged with blemishing the record of undeniably great men of science as though one were a raker of muck that a gentleman would pass by in silence. Even more, to investigate the subject systematically is to be regarded not merely as a muckraker, but as a muckmaker. For when sociological analysis is stripped bare of sentiment, it often leaves the sociologist shivering in the cold. To respond with detachment to these hot conflicts becomes all the more difficult. And so, although historical facts to the contrary are abundantly available, there emerges a new mythology that treats competitive behavior of scientists as peculiar to our own competitive age.

This introduces an instructive paradox. These, indeed, are changing times in the ethos of science. But Watson's brash memoir does not testify to a breakdown of once prevailing norms that call for discreet and soft-spoken comment on scientific contemporaries. A memoir such as his would have been regarded as a benign model of disciplined restraint by the turbulent scientific community of the seventeenth century. That it should have created the stir it did testifies that, with the institutionalization of science, the austere mores governing the public demeanor of scientists and the public evaluation of contemporaries have become more exacting rather than less. As a result, Watson's little book, so restrained in substance and so mild in tone by comparison with

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the caustic and sometimes venomous language of, say, Galileo or Newton, violates the sentiments of the many oriented to these more exacting mores.

Within such a context, the behavior of scientists involved in races for priority or in the increasingly rare disputes over priority tends to be condemned, rather than analyzed. It is morally judged, not systematically investigated. The disputes are described as "unfortunate" with the moral judgment being substituted for the effort to understand what they imply for the psychology of scientists and the sociology of science as an institution. At least since Goethe, we note references to "all those foolish quarrels about earlier and later discovery, plagiary, and quasi-purloinings." We are free, of course, to find this behavior unfortunate or foolish or comic or sad. But these affective responses to the behavior of our ancestors-in-science or our brothers-in-science have usurped the place that might be given to analysis of this behavior and its implications for the ways in which science develops. It is as though the physician were to respond only evaluatively to illness, describe it as unfortunate or painful and consider his job done, or as though the psychiatrist were to describe the behavior of schizophrenics as absurd and to substitute this sentiment for the effort to discover what brings that behavior about. The undisciplined tendency to respond in terms of sentiments has generated resistance to recognizing the central role of competition throughout the modern era of science.

This resistance is expressed in various ways: by seeking to trivialize the fact, by regarding the concern with priority as rare or aberrant (when it is in truth frequent and typical), by motivated misperceptions of the facts or by a hiatus in recall and reporting. Such resistance often leads to those wish-fulfilling beliefs, false memories and mythologies that we describe as illusions. And of such expressions of resistance the annals of science are uncommonly full. So much so, that I have arrived at a rule of thumb that seems to work fairly well. The rule is this: whenever the biography or autobiography of a scientist announces that he had little or no concern with priority, there is a reasonably good chance that, not many pages later in the book, we shall find him

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deeply embroiled in one or another episode where priority is at issue. A few cases must again stand for many.

The authoritative biography of that great psychiatrist of the Salpêtrière, Charcot, states that, despite his many discoveries, he "never thought for a moment to claim priority or reward." Our rule of thumb leads us to expect what we find: some thirty pages later, there is a detailed account of Charcot insisting on having been first in recognizing exophthalmic goiter and a little later, emphatically affirming that he "would like to claim priority" (the language is his) for the idea of isolating patients suffering from hysteria.

Or again, Harvey Cushing writes of the brilliant Halsted that he was "over-modest about his work, indifferent to matters of priority." Alerted by our rule of thumb, we find some twenty pages later in the book where this is cited, a letter by Halsted about his work on cocaine: "I anticipated all of Schleich's work by about six years (or five) . . . I showed Wölfler how to use cocaine. He had declared that it was useless in surgery. But before I left Vienna he had published an enthusiastic article in one of the daily papers on the subject. It did not, however, occur to him to mention my name."

Or in the mood a fortiori consider the instance of that serene, contemplative, modest and, many would say, most distinguished scientist to have lived his entire life in this country: Willard Gibbs. His biographer, L. P. Wheeler, follows the established practice, recording that Gibbs was "undistracted by personal ambition and unconcerned with rewards." Again: "The fact that *he* had made a discovery was to him an irrelevant matter; the important thing was the truth established." But our rule of thumb, which now plainly threatens to become transformed into a powerful canon, prepares us for Wheeler's observation, ten pages later, that the delayed recognition of Gibbs's pioneering contributions to thermodynamics could not have resulted from Gibbs's "lack of interest in calling attention to his work" since he took "rather unusual pains in the distribution . . . of his papers," having compiled a handwritten list of every mathematician, astronomer, physicist and chemist throughout the world who might be interested in

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his work, this amounting to a list of five hundred and seven names. And a little later, there is a moving letter by Gibbs explaining in detail that "I was led essentially to Grassmann's algebra of vectors, independently of any influence from him or any one else"; another long letter to Grassmann's son urging him to establish Grassmann's priority over Hamilton "in the cause of historical justice" and, to take only one more instance of Gibbs's total lack of interest in matters of priority, there is his astute note to Craig:

> I believe that a Kampf um Dasein is just commencing between the different methods and notations of multiple algebra, especially between the ideas of Grassmann & of Hamilton. The most important question is of course that of merit, but with this questions of priority are inextricably entangled, & will be certain to be the more discussed, since there are so many persons who can judge of priority to one who can judge of merit.

But perhaps the most apt case of the myth taking precedence over an accessible reality is provided by Ernest Jones, writing in his comprehensive biography that "Although Freud was never interested in questions of priority, which he found merely boring, he was fond of exploring the source of what appeared to be original ideas, particularly his own. . ." This is an extraordinarily illuminating statement by a scholar who had devoted his own life to penetrating the depths of the human soul. For, of course, no one could have known better than Jones—"known" in the narrowly cognitive sense—how very often Freud turned to matters of priority: in his own work, in the work of his colleagues (both friends and enemies) and in the history of psychology altogether. In point of fact, Freud expressed an interest in this matter on more than one hundred and fifty recorded occasions (I make no estimate of the unrecorded ones). With characteristic self-awareness, he reports that he even dreamed about priority and the due allocation of credit for accomplishments in science. He oscillates between the poles of his ambivalence toward priority: occasionally taking multiple discoveries to be practically inescapable, as when he reports a fantasy in which "science would ignore me entirely during my lifetime; some decades later, someone else would infallibly come upon the same things—for which the time was not now ripe—, and

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would achieve recognition for them and bring me honor as a forerunner whose failure had been inevitable." At other times, he reluctantly or insistently acknowledges anticipations of his own ideas or reports his own anticipations of others; he "implores" his disciple Lou Andreas-Salomé to finish an essay in order "not to give me precedence in time"; he admonishes Adler for what he describes as his "uncontrolled craving for priority" just as he admonishes Georg Groddeck for being unable to conquer "that banal ambition which hankers after originality and priority"; over a span of forty years, he repeatedly reassesses the distinctive roles of Breuer and himself in establishing psychoanalysis; he returns time and again to his priority-conflict with Janet; he writes nostalgically about the days of "my splendid isolation" when "there was nothing to hustle me. . . My publications which I was able to place with a little trouble, could always lag far behind my knowledge and could be postponed as long as I pleased, since there was no doubtful 'priority' to be defended" (or, put in today's idiom, as long as psychoanalysis was not a hot field, he could enjoy the luxury of leisurely publication). Again and again, he allocates priorities among others (Le Bon, Ferenczi, Bleuler, Stekel being only a few among the many); he even credits Adler with priority for an error; and, to prolong the occasions no further, he repeatedly intervenes in priority-battles among his disciples and colleagues (for example, between Abraham and Jung), saying that he could not "stifle the disputes about priority for which there were so many opportunities under these conditions of work in common."

Judging from this small sampling of cases in point, it may not be audacious to interpret as a sign of resistance to reality Jones's remarkable statement that "Freud was never interested in questions of priority, which he found merely boring. . ." That Freud was ambivalent toward matters of priority, true; that he was pained by conflicts over priority, indisputable; that he was concerned to establish the priority of others as well as himself, beyond doubt and significant; but to describe him as "never interested in the question" and as "bored" by it requires the prodigious feat of denying, as though they had never occurred, scores of

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occasions on which Freud exhibited profound involvement in the matter, many of these being occasions that Jones himself has detailed with the loving care of a genuine scholar. It is true that Freud appears to have been no more concerned with it than were Galileo or Newton, Laplace or Darwin, or any of the other giants of science about whom biographers have announced an entire lack of interest in priority just before, as careful scholars, they inundate us with a flood of evidence to the contrary. This denial of the realities they report and then segregate is an instance of keeping intellect and perception in abeyance in the interest of preserving a prevalent myth about human behavior.

Such resistance has obvious parallels in the history of thought, not least in the history of psychoanalysis itself, when amply available facts with far-reaching theoretical implications were regarded as unedifying or unsavory, ignoble or trivial, and so were conscientiously ignored or shunted off to one side for moral rather than analytical judgments. It is a little like the behavior of psychologists who once ignored sexuality because it was a subject not fit for polite society, or regarded dreams, incomplete actions and slips of the tongue or pen as manifestly trivial and so undeserving of serious inquiry.

Not only the historians and biographers of science but scientists themselves often manifest ambivalence toward the facts of priority-oriented behavior. Even while he was assembling documents to prove his priority, for example, Darwin registers his mixed feelings, writing Lyell: "My good friend, forgive me. This is a trumpery letter, influenced by trumpery feelings." In a postscript, he assures Lyell that "I will never trouble you or Hooker on the subject again." The next day, he writes Lyell: "It seems hard on me that I should lose my priority of many years' standing." Then, a few days later, he writes again to say: "Do not waste much time [on this matter]. It is miserable in me to care at all about priority." Moreover, we need not have waited for the Watson memoir to be reminded that different styles of scientific investigation are variously bound up with different roles in achieving priority. Fifty years after the joint Darwin-Wallace paper was presented to the Linnean Society, Wallace was still insisting upon the contrast be-

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tween his own hurried work, written within a week after the great idea came to him, and Darwin's work, based on twenty years of collecting evidence. "*I* was then (as often since) the 'young man in a hurry,'" said the reminiscing Wallace, "*he,* the painstaking and patient student seeking ever the full demonstration of the truth he had discovered, rather than to achieve immediate personal fame."

Freud recognizes his own ambivalence when he writes of his work on the Moses of Michelangelo that, having come upon a little book published in 1863 by an Englishman, Watkiss Lloyd, he read it

> with mixed feelings. I once more had occasion to experience in myself what unworthy and puerile motives enter into our thoughts and acts even in a serious cause. [Take note of the language: "unworthy and puerile motives," for we shall be returning to its implications before long.] My first feeling was of regret that the author should have anticipated so much of my thought, which seemed precious to me because it was the result of my own efforts; and it was only in the second instance that I was able to get pleasure from its unexpected confirmation of my opinion. Our views, however, diverge on one very important point.

This degree of self-awareness is a far cry from the ambivalence of a Descartes who manages to write that "he does not boast of being the first discoverer" and then proceeds to insist on his priority over Pascal or to beg his friend Mersenne "to tell him [Hobbes] as little as possible about . . . my unpublished opinions, for if I'm not greatly mistaken, he is a man who is seeking to acquire a reputation at my expense and through shady practices."

All of this brings us finally to the question touched off by the responses of many scientists and laymen to the Watson memoir. We are perhaps ready to see now that those responses relate to the long-standing denial that through the centuries, scientists, and often the greatest among them, have been concerned with achieving and safeguarding their priority. The question is, of course: what leads to this uneasiness about acknowledging the drive for priority in science? Why the curious notion that a thirst for significant originality and for having that originality accredited by

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competent colleagues is depraved—somewhat like a thirst for, say, bourbon and 7-Up? Or, in Freud's self-deprecatory words, that it is an "unworthy and puerile" motive for doing science?

In one aspect, the embarrassed attitude of a Darwin or Freud toward his own interest in priority is based upon the implicit assumption that behavior is actuated by a single motive, which can then be appraised as good or bad, as noble or ignoble. It is assumed that the truly dedicated scientist must be moved only by the concern with advancing knowledge. As a result, deep interest in having his priority recognized is seen as marring his nobility of purpose as a man of science (although it might be remembered that 'noble' once meant the widely-known). The assumption of a single motive is of course unsound, as no one knew better than Freud himself. Scientific inquiry, like human action generally, stems from a variety and amalgam of motives in which the passion for creating new knowledge is supported by the passion for recognition by peers and the derivative competition for place.

There is, nevertheless, a germ of psychological truth in the suspicion enveloping the drive for recognition in science. Any extrinsic reward—fame, money, position—is morally ambiguous and potentially subversive of culturally esteemed values. For as rewards are meted out, they can displace the original motive: concern with recognition can displace concern with advancing knowledge. An excess of incentives can produce distracting conflict. But when the institution of science works effectively (and, like other social institutions, it does not always do so), recognition and esteem accrue to those scientists who have best fulfilled their roles, to those who have made the fundamental contributions to the common stock of knowledge. Then are found those happy circumstances in which moral obligation and self-interest coincide and fuse. The ambivalence of scientists toward their own interest in having their priority recognized—an ambivalence we have seen registered even by that most astute of psychologists, Freud—shows them to assume that such an ancillary motive somehow tarnishes the purity of their interest in scientific inquiry. Yet it need not be that scientists seek only to win the applause of their peers but, rather, that they are comforted, reassured and gratified by it, when it does ring out. In

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the rare instance, they may even catch a glimpse of their own immortality.

In another aspect, the ambivalence toward priority means that scientists reflect in themselves the ambivalence built into the social institution of science itself. On one side, the institutional norms of science exert pressure upon scientists to assert their claims, and this goes far toward explaining the seeming paradox that even those meek and unaggressive men, such as Henry Cavendish and James Watt in the Water Controversy, ordinarily slow to press their claims in other spheres, will often do so in their scientific life. The ways in which the norms of science help produce this result seem clear enough. On every side, the scientist is reminded that it is his role to advance knowledge and his happiest fulfillment of that role, to advance knowledge greatly. This is only to say, of course, that in the institution of science originality is at a premium. For it is through original contributions, in greater or smaller increments, that knowledge advances. Having acquired this sentiment from the institution of science, scientists find it difficult to give up a claim to a new idea or a new finding that in effect testifies to others and to themselves that they have lived up to their commitment. Yet the same institution of science emphasizes selfless dedication to the advancement of knowledge. Concern with achieving priority and ambivalence toward that concern register in the individual scientist what is generated by the complex value system of science.

In still another aspect, ambivalence toward concern with priority derives from the mistaken belief that it must express naked self-interest, that it is altogether self-serving. On the surface, the hunger for recognition appears as mere personal vanity, generated from within and craving satisfaction from without. But when we reach deeper into the institutional complex that gives added edge to that hunger, it turns out to be anything but personal, repeated as it is with slight variation by one scientist after another. Vanity, so-called, is then seen as the outer face of the inner need for assurance that one's work really matters, that one has measured up to the hard standards maintained by at least some members of the community of scientists. Sometimes, of course, the desire for rec-

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ognition is stepped up until it gets out of hand. It becomes a driving lust for acclaim; megalomania replaces the comfort of reassurance. But the extreme case need not be taken for the modal one. In providing apt recognition for accomplishment, the institution of science serves several functions, both for men of science and for maintenance of the institution itself.

The community of science thus provides for the social validation of scientific work. In this respect, it amplifies that famous opening line of Aristotle's *Metaphysics:* "All men by nature desire to know." Perhaps, but men of science by culture desire to know that what they know is really so. The organization of science operates as a system of institutionalized vigilance, involving competitive cooperation. It affords both commitment and reward for finding where others have erred or have stopped before tracking down the implications of their results or have passed over in their work what is there to be seen by the fresh eye of another. In such a system, scientists are at the ready to pick apart and appraise each new claim to knowledge. This unending exchange of critical judgment, of praise and punishment, is developed in science to a degree that makes the monitoring of children's behavior by their parents seem little more than child's play. Only after the originality and consequence of his work have been attested by significant others can the scientist feel reasonably confident about it. Deeply felt praise for work well done, moreover, exalts donor and recipient alike; it joins them both in symbolizing the common enterprise. That, in part, expresses the character of competitive cooperation in science.

The function of reassurance by recognition has a dependable basis in the social aspects of knowledge. Few scientists have great certainty about the worth of their work. Even that psychological stalwart, T. H. Huxley, seemingly the acme of self-confidence, tells in his diary what it meant to him to be elected to the Royal Society at the age of twenty-six, by far the youngest in his cohort. It provided him, above all, with much needed reassurance that he was on the right track; in his own language, "acknowledgement of the value of what" he had done. And since, like the rest of us, Huxley was occasionally inclined to doubt his own capacities and to think himself a fool, he concluded that "the only use of honours is as an

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antidote to such fits of 'the blue devils.' " When he later learned that he was within an ace of receiving the Royal Medal of the Society—he did get it the next year—he went on to say:

> What I care for is the justification which the being marked in this position gives to the course I have taken. Obstinate and self-willed as I am . . . there are times when grave doubts overshadow my mind, and then such testimony as this restores my self-confidence.

But authentic reassurance can be provided only by the scientists whose judgment one in turn respects. As we sociologists like to put it, we each have our reference groups and individuals, whose opinions of our performance matter. Our peers and superiors in the hierarchy of accomplishment become the significant judges for us. Darwin writing Huxley about the *Origin of Species* "with awful misgivings" thought that "perhaps I had deluded myself like so many have done, and I then fixed in my mind three judges, on whose decision I determined mentally to abide. The judges were Lyell, Hooker, and yourself." In this, Darwin was replicating the behavior of many another scientist, both before and after him. The astronomer John Flamsteed, before his vendetta with Newton, wrote that "I study not for present applause. Mr. Newton's approbation is more to me than the cry of all the ignorant in the world." In almost the same language, Schrödinger writes Einstein that "your approval and Planck's mean more to me than that of half the world." And a Leo Szilard or a Max Delbrück, widely known as exceedingly tough-minded and demanding judges who, all uncompromising, will not relax their standards of judgment even to provide momentary comfort to their associates are reference figures whose plaudits for work accomplished have a multiplier effect, influencing in turn the judgments of many another scientist.

Other strategic facts show the inadequacy of treating an interest in recognition of scientific work as merely an expression of egotism. Very often, the discoverers themselves take no part in arguing their claims to the priority or significance of their contributions. Instead, their friends or other more detached scientists see the assignment of priority as a moral issue not to be scanted. For them, the assigning of all credit due is a functional requirement

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for the institution of science itself. After all, to protect the priority of another is only to act in accord with the norm, which has been gathering force since the time of Francis Bacon, that requires scientists to acknowledge their indebtedness to the antecedent work of others. As Kapitza says of his master, "If anybody in publishing his work forgot to mention that the given idea was not his own, Rutherford immediately objected. He saw to it in every possible way that . . . true priority be maintained." Or, to take perhaps the most momentous instance in our day, there is Niels Bohr, agitated by the thought that Meitner and Frisch, and for that matter, Hahn and Strassmann too, might have their priority in the splitting of the atom lost to view in the avalanche of publicity given the Columbia University experiments, going to immense pains to set the record straight.

Now these bystanders stand to gain little or nothing from advancing the claims of their candidates, except in the Pickwickian sense of having identified themselves with them. Their behavior can scarcely be explained by egotism. Their own status is not being threatened. Instead, their disinterested moral indignation is a signpost announcing the violation of a moral norm in the institution of science. In this sense, the concern with priority, with all the passionate feelings it often evokes, is not merely an expression of self-interest or hot tempers, although these may raise the temperature of the controversy. Rather, they constitute responses to the institutional norms of intellectual property, norms that transcend the personality-needs of this or that scientist.

From still another perspective we can see the fallacy of the new mythology that construes the thirst for priority as altogether self-serving. Often the drive for recognized originality is only the other side of the coin of the elation that comes from having arrived at a new and true scientific idea or result. The deeper the commitment to the discovery, the greater, presumably, the reaction to the threat of having its originality denied. Concern with priority is often the counterpart to elation in discovery—the eureka syndrome. We have only to remember what is perhaps the most ecstatic expression of joy in discovery found in the annals of science: here, in abbreviation, is Kepler on his discovery of the third planetary law:

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When I prophesied 22 years ago as soon as I found the heavenly orbits were of the same number as the five (regular) solids, what I fully believed long before I had seen Ptolemy's Harmonics, what I promised my friends in the name of this book, which I christened before I was 16 years old, what I urged as an end to be sought, that for which I joined Tycho Brahe, for which I settled in Prague, for which I spent most of my life at astronomical calculations—at last I have brought to light and seen to be true beyond my fondest hopes. It is not 18 months since I saw the first ray of light, three months since the unclouded sun-glorious sight burst upon me!. . . The book is written, the die is cast. Let it be read now or by posterity, I care not which. It may well wait a century for a reader, as God has waited 6000 years for an observer.

We can only surmise how deep would have been Kepler's anguish had another claimed that he had long before come upon the third law, just as we know how the young Bolyai, despairing to learn that Gauss had anticipated him in part of his non-Euclidean geometry and with the further blow, years later, of coming upon Lobachevsky's parallel work, suffered a great fall from the peak of exhilaration to the slough of despond and never again published any work in mathematics. The joy in discovery expressed by the young Jim Watson does not outstrip that of a Gay-Lussac, seizing upon the person nearest him for a victory waltz so that he could "express his ecstasy on the occasion of a new discovery by the poetry of motion." Or, to come closer home, William James, "all aflame" with his idea of pragmatism, confessing that he is unable to contain his exhilaration over it. Or, in more restrained exuberance, Joseph Henry, once he had hit upon a new way of constructing electromagnets, reporting that "when this conception came into my brain, I was so pleased with it that I could not help rising to my feet and giving it my hearty approbation." There is ample precedent for the soaring spirits, the "pitch of excitement," the "delight and amazement" experienced by Watson and Crick in their successful quest for "the secret of life."

In short, when a scientist has made a discovery that matters, he is as happy as a scientist can be. But the height of exultation may only deepen the plunge into despair should the discovery be taken from him. If the loss is occasioned by finding that it was, in truth,

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not a first but a later independent discovery, that he had lost the race, the blow may be severe enough, although mitigated by the sad consolation that at least the discovery had been confirmed by another. But this is nothing, of course, when compared with the traumatizing experience of having it suggested that not only was the discovery later than another of like kind but that it was really borrowed. The drive for priority is in part an effort to reassure oneself of a capacity for original thought. Thus, rather than being mutually exclusive, as the new mythology of science would have it, joy in discovery and the quest for recognition by scientific peers are stamped out of the same psychological coin. In their conjoint ways, they both express a basic commitment to the value of advancing knowledge.

Chargaff is correct, I believe, in suggesting that the Watson memoir "may contribute to the much-needed demythologizing of modern science." But as I have tried to suggest, to put the accent on "*modern* science" is only to displace the old myth with a new variant. In noting this, I am scarcely alone. Some practicing scientists, both before and after *The Double Helix,* have put aside the myth that competition for originality in science is alien to joy in discovery and that the drive for recognition should occasion self-contempt. Hans Selye asks his peers: "Why is everybody so anxious to deny that he works for recognition? . . . all the scientists I know sufficiently well to judge (and I include myself in this group) are extremely anxious to have their work recognized and approved by others. Is it not below the dignity of an objective scientific mind to permit such a distortion of his true motives? Besides, what is there to be ashamed of?" And, as though he were responding to this rhetorical question, P. B. Medawar goes on to argue: "In my opinion the idea that a scientist ought to be indifferent to matters of priority is simply humbug. Scientists are entitled to be proud of their accomplishments, and what accomplishments can they call 'theirs' except the things they have done or thought of first? People who criticize scientists for wanting to enjoy the satisfaction of intellectual ownership are confusing possessiveness with pride of possession." Himself an inveterate observer of human behavior rather than only of economic numbers, Paul Samuelson also distin-

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guishes cleanly the gold of scientific fame from the brass of popular celebrity. This is how he concludes his presidential address to fellow economists:

> Not for us is the limelight and the applause. But that doesn't mean the game is not worth the candle or that we do not in the end win the game. In the long run, the economic scholar works for the only coin worth having—our own applause.

At a time when scientists and humanists search for common understandings, it is only fitting that the practicing scientist and the practicing poet should both have perceived the deeper implications of the thrust for significant and acknowledged originality in living science. With the poet's inward eye, Robert Frost puts it so:

> Would he mind had I
> Had him beaten to it?
> Could he tell me why
> Be original?
> Why was it so very,
> Very necessary
> To be first of all?
> How about the lie
> Someone else was first?
> He saw I was daffing.
> He took this from me.
> Still it was no laughing
> Matter I could see.
> He made no reply.
>
> Of all crimes the worst
> Is the theft of glory,
> Even more accursed
> Than to rob the grave.*

The history of science declares what the poet sings: a care for truth signifies a care for the truth-seeker.

* From one version of the poem "Kitty Hawk" by Robert Frost, which first appeared in the *Atlantic*. Copyright © 1956 by Robert Frost. Copyright © 1957 by Estate of Robert Frost. Reprinted by permission of Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.

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The Old Man Over Sherry

HOLLIS SUMMERS

Early in some other century
Once I attended an elegant party
Where fifty men played violins,
And a small lady fluttered a fan.
We danced among the violins.
The lady was full of charity.

Why do I mention the party here
In winter, where no fan moves the air
And my heart is better ordered
And my head clear?
Well, only because I remember
I remember.

✪ *Seven Occasions* and *The Peddler and Other Domestic Matters* are recent volumes of poetry by HOLLIS SUMMERS. A novel, *The Day After Sunday,* appeared last year. Mr. Summers teaches at Ohio University.

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The American Textbook

An Unscientific Phenomenon—Quality Without Control

WILLIAM JOVANOVICH

IN FEW PLACES OF THE WORLD today is the education of children left wholly to the discretion—to the attention or inattention—of their parents. This is true in communist and capitalist countries alike, and alike in those societies where religious authority is either powerful (Italy) or negligible (Australia). The modern notion is that primary education, at least, is not a personal and discrete process, not something to be left to the privacy of student and parent or tutor. Of course, there is no stopping a parent from instructing his infants. The eighteenth-century writer Sir Richard Steele said, "The truth of it is, the rudiments of education are given very indiscreetly by most parents." No, the modern notion is that education is a public concern, a civic process, and it must therefore be regulated, systematized and institutionalized. Parents still remain indiscreet today, but even more subversive than parents is television, which has an enormous instructional influence upon children long before they reach the schoolhouse door. Of television more will be said later, but first let us observe how casual in past times Americans were about creating *systems* of instruction. Indeed, it is a distinctive feature of American educational history that textbooks are partly the means by which the school curriculum became regularized—and primary and secondary courses of study became more uniform—from state to state within the Union. What is perhaps even more remarkable is that

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these textbooks were, and are, produced by entrepreneur publishers, that is, businessmen who compete with one another and are under no control from either the local or federal governments.

During the early part of the nineteenth century the American publisher obtained manuscripts from authors and then printed and sold a *general* list of books. He was not subject to any professional, or official, necessity to relate one book to another in a curricular schema. Rather, he offered a random list of books to schoolmasters on the speculation that he could meet their individual needs. There were few public school systems with governing boards elected by the citizens. During this period there were church schools; there were "private" schools for children of those parents who could afford to pay fees; and there were "public" schools in which a master was paid by a town out of its tax money. Such a master had little or no professional relation to other educators in his vicinity; he tended to set his own standards. Publishers did not base their business on sequential, graded textbooks for the simple reason that there were few accepted courses of study to which books could be matched. Indeed, owing to the absence of compulsory, universal education, there was small agreement on *what* should be taught. Given methods of instruction that varied from village to village, let alone from state to state, the early American publisher depended upon an eclectic, and essentially unplanned, list of books to satisfy a small market. A publisher from Boston or New York or Philadelphia would offer little more than Latin and Greek grammars, a Bible, histories of England and of the United States, a dictionary, a spelling book. Beyond an elementary drill in reading, spelling and arithmetic, there were no set requirements for entry into secondary school and even college. It was possible for a boy—at least until the middle of the nineteenth century—to pass from grammar (elementary) school to college with the aid of a bit of tutoring on the side.

Under these conditions, textbook publishing did not develop into a specialized business until about 1880. As for most aspects of American society, the great watershed of changes in education occurred at the turn of the century. The rise of industrialism

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gave rise to the cities—and it gave people the opportunity to improve their lot *within* the cities. America was making good its promise following the terrible ordeal of its Civil War. American society was again the *tabula rasa,* the clean slate on which every man could begin anew, were he given the chance to learn. Public education was now regarded as an urgent social necessity and soon, because of the millions of immigrants, it became a political expedient as well. Public education quickly assumed national rather than local characteristics. Primary and secondary schooling throughout the country became more standardized. A more or less uniform curriculum, based on a graded progression of "skills" that the student was expected to master, was adopted from state to state. The preparation of lower-school teachers became, at least quantitatively, the chief task of the public colleges.

This grand change in American education arose from a number of sources, the most determinant of which was mass immigration to the United States. Every day, every ship brought immigrants: Germans and Scandinavians toward the end of the nineteenth century, Slavs and Italians and Greeks and Armenians somewhat later, until 1921, when the gates were lowered by laws that set yearly quotas. Immigration of such magnitude—more than twenty-two million people entered the country between 1880 and 1914—made the educator's immediate and singular job that of teaching English and citizenship. (Although I was born in the United States, I myself knew little English when I entered school, for I spoke Serbian and Polish to my family and to the neighbors.) Factories brought the immigrants; immigrants swelled the towns into cities; and the cities enforced the creation of school *systems.* There was, moreover, the phenomenon of America's constantly traveling population. This restlessness, which has hardly diminished over the past half-century and still amazes the world, had a singular effect on both teaching and educational publishing. A fifth-grade child from Pennsylvania could readily appear during midyear in Illinois, and he needed to be assured of a certain consistency in the curriculum and in the books he used. (Today one quarter of all students in the United States change schools *every year* because their parents move their residences.) By the time of

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World War I, it was possible to assume that a course in American history would be taught in the seventh or eighth grade not only in Massachusetts but also in Alabama and California. Moreover, across the nation the students in the course were using the same *kind* of textbook. Here was, then, a collaboration between public educators and private publishers that grew and prospered without being "planned." The schools inscribed patterns of instruction. The hundreds of publishers issued books, on their own financial speculation, to fit the patterns; and by a process that today we would term (in learning theory) reinforcement, *the books made the course just as often as the course made the books.* By good result, one reinforces the other.

All these changes encouraged the growth of textbook publishing as a business enterprise independent of either local or national government control. In American publishing it is possible for a single book to sell millions of copies in an open market. A salesman can now carry a small, manageable collection of books and, what is more important, he can sell centrally, conveniently to entire school *systems* embracing scores of schools and hundreds of teachers. No longer, as is still the custom in parts of Canada, are publishers compelled to produce books according to strict specifications laid down by local authorities; nor are they "encouraged" to publish books by the local teachers or supervisors. Today, the educational publisher can afford to commit large sums of money for careful editorial research and expensive graphics in the publication of a basic textbook—or a sequential series of textbooks—for a particular subject like mathematics or history. The economics of textbook publishing has become integral to the practices of American education itself. The economic formula works like this: basic lists of textbook titles and concentrated selling result in a rapid turnover of books and in ample profits; profits enable the publisher to offer educators not only original instructional programs but also a large number of practical teaching aids and complementary media, including films, records, tapes, laboratory kits, tests, and "teaching technics" of various kinds. Over many years the educators responded to the assistance of publishers by becoming increasingly contingent upon them. Their

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partnership remained fairly uncomplicated until the day the Russians ventured into space.

It demonstrates, I think, the deep consciousness of education in the people of the United States—and its force as the national *Geist*—that so many Americans immediately saw in Sputnik a challenge not to their military but to their schools. That the Russians, who, like the Americans, believe in universal compulsory education with a pragmatic philosophy, could achieve primacy in space exploration suggested that they had adapted their training systems to produce specialists of a high order—if not, indeed, an entire elite of scientists and technicians. It also suggested that it was time for the American public schools to recast their old-time aim, in the days of immigration: "Make Americans." Now the aim had to be: "Make Americans more excellent faster." What happened in the 1950's in broader terms than mere patriotic slogans is plain enough. Americans are aware that theirs is no longer a society based on "heavy industry," requiring large numbers of semiskilled and unskilled laborers to produce basic capital goods. It is transforming into a refined and specialized industrial complex that demands highly skilled and versatile workers. To manipulate the technics of the space age—and even to consume its products—requires a more sophisticated citizenry.

During the past decade schools and colleges have reexamined the needs of students. They seek to diversify and at the same time to intensify their curriculums, to provide special training for students according to their abilities and interests, to distinguish between advantaged and disadvantaged students. Viewed from a point of national interest, the schools have—during the past decade at least—followed two elements in American foreign policy: first, our dependence for peace upon international cooperation with nations of both the East and the West; second, our dependence for economic—and military—prowess on scientific and technological skills. Accordingly, the most insistent demands upon schools and colleges today are for the acceleration of study in foreign languages, mathematics and sciences. (To these will, no doubt, soon be added some amalgam of social and behavioral sciences, which

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remain an area of uncertainty and dispute among academicians.) Teaching English and citizenship is still the job of the lower schools (especially so in those places where Spanish-speaking immigrants are clustered, the Puerto Ricans, Cubans and Mexicans), but it no longer can be called a primary aim of public education in the United States.

It can hardly surprise the contemporary American publisher that the conventional textbooks he once issued are being criticized at a time when so many changes are taking place in American society. Nor should he wonder that his former collaboration with the schools and colleges has been altered by the fact of *their* changing. The publisher needs now, in effect, to cancel the old "contract" and renegotiate his interest—like the Emperor Francis Joseph, who in 1870, the year the Pope was declared infallible, canceled the Empire's Concordat with Rome on the grounds that one of the contracting parties had changed! The entrepreneur-publisher in the United States today is confronted by many new developments that he ought to be able to comprehend and, in time, to affect. Three of these developments are central: first, the federal government has entered public education in a manner (and to a degree) never before known in American history; second, the recognition that the black people in America have not been given professional and social opportunity equal to that of the whites requires new educational measures; third, new technology has created diversity and flexibility in teaching materials, to the extent that the textbook standing alone seems almost inadequate and outmoded.

Granting, as practically all educators in the United States do, that educational publishing should be conducted as a private business, publishers have raised some questions about the growing influence of Washington on the nation's instructional materials and testing. In the past, whenever federal aid went to schools and colleges it was carefully limited (if not indeed disguised); typically, federal funds went for "free milk to pupils" and the like, rather than for anything that would affect the substance and methods of teaching. Although the federal government did cede public lands to establish colleges in 1862 and 1890, practically no

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federal funds during the past century have been spent to construct buildings, to pay teachers, or to purchase books and supplies. The tradition of local control over public schools and universities has been perdurable and very strong. The tradition is still strong, but since the late 1950's, plainly, it has been under assault. At present most congressmen are probably willing to accept *direct* federal aid to schools (for buildings and salaries among other things), but they have been unable to resolve an important constitutional question. The courts have tended to block the use of tax money for schools that are related to churches—this is held to be a violation of the United States Constitution—but the Congress has not been willing, finally, to exclude "private" schools.

Since 1965, despite the constitutional issue, huge amounts of federal money have been given to local schools to spend for various purposes: textbooks, films, and audio-visual and laboratory equipment for classrooms; general books for libraries; special programs for teaching students who suffer learning deficiencies as well as students who have "dropped out" of formal schooling; research and development of curricular materials. The last item is significant to the relation of the government—which of course uses public funds—to the private publishing businesses. The federal government has financed a number of projects to prepare books (and other media) for secondary schools in the fields of physics, biology, foreign languages, English and mathematics. The question arises: should the government enter into publishing itself? Everyone agrees it should not, given the American system of private enterprise. Should the government, then, allow all private publishers to "bid" for the privilege of producing a program and then license a single publisher? This has been done, but it is argued that the publisher who wins the contract to issue books that were originated by public money has gained an ultimately unfair advantage over other publishers, who are no less patriotic as taxpayers. Or should the government make available its manuscripts for everyone to copy—and publish—freely without copyright restriction? This has been done also, but, then, it is argued that without an "authorized" edition issued by a publisher who has nationwide offices and representatives, the scholars and writers

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who were engaged to prepare the books may complain that their texts will be inaccurately copied and their own efforts, thereby, diffused. It is obvious that simple answers will not serve here. Napoleon said that the British are a nation of shopkeepers. Surely the Americans are a nation of logicians and litigants.

However complicated the issues may seem, the fact is that federal aid has not only enriched publishers (because of the increased buying of books) but also stimulated them to become bolder. During the past five years a number of publishers have issued new textbook programs that seem surprisingly radical to the older teachers and to the established supervisors of instruction in the schools. These publishers have sought to use various media, not books alone, to create whole systems of instruction in which the teacher and student can draw on the most suitable instrument, as it were, at the most suitable time in the daily learning process. Federally financed textbooks have also helped to diminish the social and political taboos that once so persistently plagued the publishers and made some of them conservative and overtimid. Publishers are now, as a result, rarely intimidated by the threat that local communities, because of their provincial prejudices, will refuse to buy books intended for a national audience. Hence, American textbooks today are much freer than in past times to discuss "delicate" matters in biology (for example, human reproduction), sociology (sexual mores), and history (racial and religious discrimination). Granting these several benefits to publishers as a result of federal spending, it is also true—here the litigant American speaks!—that some federal projects have been rather wasteful and unsuccessful. For example, the researches into teaching English grammar and literature and in social studies are, in my opinion, less inventive and pragmatical than the works in this field that are being financed and created by private publishers. In any event, the *local* schools remain the arbiters of what they will teach as well as what books and other materials they will buy. The entrepreneur-publisher continues to sell directly to local school systems.

As for the second crucial and central development of our time —an active and consequential recognition that Negroes have not been given equal educational opportunities with whites—the

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publisher has a serious responsibility here. The struggle of Negroes to win educational status is essentially their struggle to win economic and political status, for education is the dominant social process in the United States. Calvin Coolidge, who was President of the United States from 1923 to 1929, once said that "the business of America is business." He could not have been more wrong. The business of America is education. And the Negro in America is demanding his full share of this most vital business. The United States is, in fact, today engaged upon a vast social and political experiment such as the world has never seen: a huge minority of colored people—twenty million blacks, ten percent of the nation's population—is striving to become fully integrated into the society. It should be recognized that the Negroes do not originate from a province or district; they do not have a "native" language; they do not even have an adequately documented racial history of their own. They live in *every* state, *every* district, *every* city of the United States. To erase all prejudice based on racism —to heal the wounds of a past period of slavery, which ended only a century ago in the United States—is, on so great a scale, an incredible undertaking. Only one other nation in the world has a similar problem, and that is South Africa, where racial segregation continues to be not only the white people's custom but also their law. The United States, nonetheless, has little to pride itself upon, for its experiment is far from concluded. Success here, which means justice before the law and justice within the hearts of men, has not been won. Yet the struggle proceeds, and triumphs, however small, are observed each day.

Some major triumphs against racial inequality will be won by educational publishers, who have at times been slow to provide the schools with textbooks (and general books) that will give the Negro pride in his people as well as pride in himself, and that will realistically describe the origins and effects of racism. Today such books are increasingly available. In some instances, Negroes themselves have forced upon publishers a change—they are themselves, after all, members of local school boards and teachers. In other instances, the publishers have made changes in textbook writing on their own initiative, despite the imputed danger that some states or districts (particularly in the South) would refuse

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to buy such books—a danger that has to be largely nonexistent. It should be kept in mind, however, that the private publisher in the United States is always confronted with the problem of selling his books to a *national* market. Some Negroes complicate his problem in preparing "unbiased, fair" textbooks; they are the so-called black militants who seek to disassociate themselves from everything connected with the white man—in Europe as well as America. For these people a textbook that describes European culture —Russian ballet or Yugoslav painting or Polish films or French fiction—is considered to be largely useless because it "supports white racism." Most American Negroes do not agree with this position, and ask only that teaching materials in the schools give black children a sense of pride in themselves and also give them (while candidly admitting to injustices of the past and present) a sense of integration with all Americans, regardless of their color or national origin. In general, this statement may be said to describe the aims, and the efforts, of the publishers in the United States today.

The third central development currently affecting educational publishing is one that is familiar to most professions and industries but is actually rather new to publishing: technological innovation. The book as a thing, as an artifact, has changed but little *in appearance or function* since the invention of movable type by Gutenberg over five hundred years ago. In manufacture, however, there have been great advances during the past two decades. High-speed rotary presses, which employ huge rolls of paper rather than flat sheets, are now common. Offset printing, which radically limits the cost of engraving, makes it possible to produce inexpensive illustrations. (Most American textbooks are lavishly illustrated, usually in four colors.) New techniques in binding make low-priced paperback books more attractive and more durable. "Cold type" composition, by which type is set photographically and electronically (most recently, by computers), is supplanting the old-fashioned linotype machines, which cast type from hot metal. Finally, it is possible, although the process still requires refinement, to print newspapers, journals and books by "electrostatic" printing, in which images are imprinted on paper (or any other surface, even an orange skin!) by electrical charges without

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the use of plates. These advances have, of course, improved the quality and reduced the cost of manufacturing books, but they have not essentially altered the function or effect of the book as a medium of communication. Other media—filmic, mechanical, electronic—have begun to appear as complementary, and even competitive, to the book as an instructional tool.

While publishers are heartened by the technological advances in printing—most of them, incidentally, do not own presses, for printing is largely an industry separate from publishing in the United States—their reaction to "teaching technics" is more intense, and certainly more complicated. Some publishers are excited that the prospect of technics will open up to them new professional and business opportunities. Others are alarmed that the book, which has long been the teacher's favorite companion, will be depreciated and even ignored if there is a rush to use "gadgetry" in the classrooms. The impact of technology has altered not only instructional methods but also the actual structure of publishing houses. Some companies that once devoted themselves solely to publishing textbooks are now also engaged in producing films, records, tapes, laboratory equipment, and in experimenting with various "teaching machines," most notably computers.

Computers are used in what is generally called "computer-assisted instruction." A student sits before a terminal, consisting of a typewriter and possibly a cathode-ray display, and by pressing keys on the typewriter (and also directing a "light pencil" toward the cathode-ray screen if it is part of the terminal) he is able to conduct a dialogue, as it were, with the programmed information stored in a central computer. The computer informs him whether he has made a correct or incorrect response to a question, and it may direct him to other aspects of the concept under study by presenting, out of sequence, still other information that is kept in the computer's immense "memory." Computer-assisted instruction is being used in a few school districts in the United States at present, but its practical application to *all* schools and colleges will require more experimentation and, chiefly, the expenditure of large funds. Meanwhile, there are various other kinds of mechanical and electrical devices that can be used by a student study-

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ing alone, including remote-control access to tape recordings, films and even print, relayed by teletype from a central location where the text of books and journals has been coded and is stored on magnetic tape. The "storage and retrieval" of text now takes many forms. Books are filmed page by page and stored in microfiche, so that a library of a million books could presumably be installed in a room three meters square. Pages of text can be copied within seconds by a chemical-electrical process called xerography; moreover, facsimiles of whole pages can be transmitted, instantly, over hundreds of miles by telephone cable or microwave. (My own company has developed means of projecting colored slides *in full daylight* on blackboards, so that students and teachers may add information by hand to the images shown.)

The role of television in education is not fully understood by a number of educators and publishers, who continue to regard it chiefly as a means of delivering lectures and demonstrations to classrooms from a central studio. This "open air" use of television, quite common to American education, is in fact a limited one. Television should be regarded, I think, as a preschool instructional instrument, a means of preparing young children at home for the rudiments of reading and for understanding elementary social concepts. This can be achieved, eventually, by the development of "discs" or "cartridges" of film that will simply be inserted into a television set—at home or in the classroom—so that one can control the timing, both the sequence and the repetition, of television programming *of his own choice.* Television is in many aspects the most influential medium of communication in our time. Its affective qualities are enormous; hence, so are its instructional capabilities. No longer, as I suggested earlier, are parents the first and only instructors of their infants. Television may even be able to reverse the trend that Jean-Paul Sartre speaks of in his autobiography, *Words.* Sartre suggests that the traditional conservatism of French peasants is perpetuated by a simple circumstance: while their fathers work in the fields, the young boys are left at home with their grandfathers and from them learn the homilies of the past. Television could change, subvert, that circumstance!

Thus, technology is providing still another ground for com-

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petition among publishers: those who risk their money and their time in experimenting with the new technics may lose or may win, depending on the soundness and quickness of their judgment. Competition is keen enough as it is. There are more than two hundred educational publishers in the United States who daily approach the schools and colleges with books and other media hoping to win professional approval—and sales. Their risk is substantial. It is possible for a publisher to spend eight years and two million dollars in preparing a series of eight textbooks (and accompanying materials) *before selling a single copy*. What is more, the publisher is expected to provide at no cost a considerable assistance to the teacher who adopts his books, including manuals created for the teacher alone, also special tests for his use, and even the services of an educational consultant (employed by the publisher) who advises teachers on methods of teaching certain subjects and concepts. Yet, the publisher's reward is substantial too, and not merely by financial reckoning. A case can be made that a process of *refinement*—refinement of quality in books and thereby refinement in the nation's education—takes place when writers must compete to draw upon a publisher's private resources, and when publishers must compete against each other to draw upon the public's resources, the tax money that supports schools, colleges, universities.

Ultimately, the publisher's reward will reside in his serious regard for his professional role. To publish is, of course, to make something known to the public. No part of publishing, whether its concern is with educational or general works, whether or not its financial support is wholly private, should be made safe from the common gaze or free from common criticism. One can hardly exaggerate the influence of books in the national history, or their pertinence to the contemporary national experience. What one can do, perhaps out of self-content, is to assume that the importance of books is obvious, that their continuance is assured, and that their permanence is inevitable, when, actually, any work that relates to the public interest must be constantly reappraised. The good publisher will ask, repeatedly, what the public interest is and what kind of publishing, among other forms of education and the arts, will advance and enlighten it.

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On Doing-One's-Thing

WALTER GOODMAN

WE ARE, BY ALL TESTS AND SIGNS, in the midst of an epidemic of the ailment known as doing-one's-thing. Carried into the Western world originally along with an innocent cargo of psychological doctrine, the germ resulted in nothing more harmful for many years than an outbreak of permissive child rearing; it festered in sinister quiet until, in this decade, the needed conditions presented themselves, and the time was ready for the infection of our entire cultural scene, from the tinselly halls of television to the heady spaces of modern poetry and painting. The two danger signs of the disease are excessive self-indulgence and self-delusion.

In a time when art seems to follow or, at any rate, to be chasing hard after politics, the doing-one's-thing syndrome may be most clearly appreciated in that lively political or antipolitical phenomenon known as the New Left. The sustaining impulse of the New Leftists is toward action, sitting in, standing up, walking out and more violent exercises. Political participation becomes a kind of therapy. Their protests have had a remarkable effect on conventional politics in this country as well as on the young protesters themselves—but some of their exertions have had effects not at all in accord with their ostensible goals. It seems not to matter; for the act of protest itself takes primacy over less dramatic considerations and internal signals replace external accomplishments as the measure of success. Where a man formulates his political strategy to get the maximum emotional kick, he is not likely to be clear-sighted about the probable results of what he is up to, or even about the morality of any particular act.

Kenneth Keniston, a most perceptive observer of our young radicals, has something to say on this point. He writes:

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Perhaps the most appealing moral terms of our time are words like "spontaneity," "individuality," "authenticity," "identity," "autonomy" —terms usually most fully developed by psychoanalytic or existential writers. Yet one can spontaneously commit murder and authentically —God forbid—press a guided-missile button. These terms give us criteria for judging *how* a thing is done, but only indirectly if at all, for evaluating *what* is done. To recur to an old philosophical distinction, the manner in which an act is performed may be a necessary condition but is not a sufficient condition for its virtuousness. To suffice, a virtuous act or goal is also needed.

In the past couple of years, off-off-Broadway, off-Broadway, and even Broadway to a slight and derivative extent, have become the scenes of the New Politics in action onstage. In Robert Brustein's definition, this effort of the *avant-garde* to translate "participatory democracy" into artistic terms, as evidenced by such productions as *Futz* and *Dionysus in 69,* demands a new egalitarianism that gives equal rank to everyone—except the author. It has brought fresh excitement to the stage and appears to be deliciously liberating to those involved in the fast-and-free extravaganzas, but I think that Brustein, who as director of the Yale Drama School bears a certain responsibility for encouraging stuff like *MacBird,* has put his finger on its limitations:

> While it is extremely unfashionable to say so these days, the creation of theatre art is not a democratic process; it is the work of an inspired individual functioning in close collaboration with disciplined craftsmen. Unless those involved are more talented and experienced than those who observe, then the theatre can have meaning only as self-indulgence; unless a supreme creative intelligence is guiding the work, then it will serve only the actor's vanity or the director's style. If spontaneity is valued for its own sake, then it soon descends into crude infantilism; if the process of work rather than the results of this process are exposed to the public, then the only ones enjoying themselves will be on the stage.

The New Left, he accurately points out, has an anarchic side to it that can reduce culture to a hash, and he might have added that it is only the willingness of an audience uncertain of standards and fearful of being thought less "with it" than the next fellow to sit still and be insulted that sustains today's Theater of the Abusive.

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The common defense against such a criticism is that the critic is timid, an old fogey, that we live in new times, which call for daring, uninhibited experimentation and the generating of new forms. No doubt. But there is reformation and there is deformation. In his annoyance over what he felt to be the phoniness of the Bruce Jay Friedman play, *Scuba Duba,* which can stand for a sizable category of Broadway hit, the *New Republic*'s Richard Gilman wrote that such works hugely muddy up the terrain and "make authentic art difficult to see." He went on:

> One of the tasks of criticism today is to make distinctions between new forms and the lack of form, to adopt as a watchword the principle Coleridge laid down when he wrote that "every reform, however necessary, will by weak minds be carried to an excess, which will itself need reforming." The New Barbarism is one manifestation of Coleridge's excess. For the critic today, as never before, the task is to keep excess seen as excess, as imposture and fraud, a task which is the unpleasant correlative of his major work of recognizing and elucidating the not yet consecrated.

The reason that Gilman finds imposture to be a special problem today is that the old forms in the arts, as many have noticed, do in fact seem to have been pretty much worked out. A serious painter is hard put to find any new way to celebrate a bowl of fruit or even the human face. Rhyme, rhythm and direct sentiment can no longer suffice for a serious poet. And how is a serious novelist to go on with the conventions of the omnipresent observer, the pauses in narrative to set each scene, to describe each entering character and bring the reader up to date, or even to go on with narrative, which itself seems to have become outdated?

Yet it is invidiously easy for a writer or painter or even a mere journalist to excuse his own want of discipline and of substance, his own deficiencies as a craftsman, by claiming to be pioneering new forms. Alfred Kazin speaks of those showy and "uninteresting poets, suffering from nothing but a lack of something to say, who in our age have so often made poetry a synonym for artifice, sterile elegance, and cultural self-pity." They rely, as do layout specialists for mass magazines and ingenious TV directors, on what Kazin calls an "empty enthusiasm for 'form,' a peculiar evasiveness of style hoping to be mistaken for profundity

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even when the writer knows that nothing very unusual is being said." In like manner, he adds, painters are constantly "trying to figure out some new bedazzlement to suit the (so-called) 'exhaustion' of old forms."

Readers of modern poetry and new novels can testify that the solutions to the problem of form usually fail; the dilemma remains. And, alas, the babe is gone with the bath water. As John Barth writes:

> Take linear plot, take resolution of conflict, take third direct object, all that business, they may very well be obsolete notions, indeed they are no doubt untenable at this late date, no doubt at all, but in fact we still lead our lives by clock and calendar, for example, and though the seasons recur our mortal human time does not . . . people still lead lives, mean and bleak and brief as they are . . . and people have characters and motives that we divine more or less inaccurately from their appearance, speech, behavior and the rest . . . people still fall in love, and out . . . and they please each other, and hurt each other . . . and they do these things in more or less conventionally dramatic fashion, unfashionable or not . . . and what goes on between them is still not only the most interesting but the most important thing in the bloody murderous world. . . . And that my dear is what writers have got to find ways to write about. . . .

Yes, but that means more work and less fun than fooling around with time sequences and type faces.

The conditions in the arts that trouble Kazin and Gilman and Barth—who writes, "That some writers lack lead in their pencils does not make writing obsolete"—afflict the crasser modes of communication too. As a matter of course, whatever developments occur in the upper reaches of our culture will, in time and in less elegant form, be found down below, in Hollywood, around Rockefeller Center, along Madison Avenue. Professionals in the mass media, ever in quest of novelty, are famous for serving as middlemen between esoterica and potboilers—a schizophrenic role, which partly accounts for their noticeable psychological problems. They know what's in the air, and their magic lies in their ability to tag onto a coming trend, a flashy technique, any device susceptible of being merchandised. And merchandising is getting easier and easier. As Irving Howe has pointed out, the "new sensibility," impatient with ideas or complexity or coherence, "as

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unarguable as orgasm, and as delicious as a lollypop," has been eagerly taken up by the mass audience. The makers of TV commercials will never be able to pay the debt they owe to the film director Richard Lester, master of the hop, skip and jump. Such harmless thefts are the kind of thing that network and advertising agency "creative" people have in mind when they proclaim that they are raising the nation's tastes. Maybe they are—in any case, they find it all very stimulating.

Midtown Manhattan is filled with jobs that are sought after because of the sense of *challenge* they provide, the creative kick even when nothing worth noticing is created. (The parallel with the New Politics speaks for itself.) At their most trivial, these jobs are nonetheless stimulating. Work in television, one often hears, is "creative" and "satisfying"; the jobs are "fun jobs." What it comes down to, usually, is that thoroughly vapid programs may be given a veneer of a sort with clever camera work. The mass media nourish symbiotic relationships, in which formula scripts absorb a moment's excitement from a director's tricks, or striking layouts attract the eye to fatuous articles and dumb stories. As a matter of fact, when it comes to substituting technique for substance, the purveyors of mass culture can lay fair claim to having been the pioneers. Credit where credit is due. Long before Andy Warhol took to painting Campbell Soup cans and turning out interminable contentless movies, public relations men had perfected the art of making a lot out of absolutely nothing. And having a swell time while doing it. It's all very challenging, very *creative.*

I suppose it is necessary at this point to declare myself a supporter of adventurous and pioneering work in the arts, wholeheartedly in favor of innovation and creativity, as who is not? But such achievements, alas, bear no necessary relationship to the *sense* of creativity that may be inspired by innovation of any sort, even when it consists merely of a trivial device to glamorize a dreary and dubious project or product. The uncelebrated fellow who designed the first Campbell Soup can showed substantially more imagination than Andy Warhol.

The best example I have encountered of the divorcement between an individual's inner satisfactions and the actual results

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of his putative creativity was at one of the writers' conferences that flourish in this land each summer. I lectured at one a few years ago, amid very agreeable New England surroundings, and was painfully impressed by how little relationship there was between the work produced and the state of mind of the producers. The writing was, with no exception that springs to mind, poor. Unbearably poor. Yet again and again in meetings with the paying guests, I was bowled over by their insistence on the *emotional* validity of their work. They spoke of their compulsion to write (as though that of itself meant they were writers) and of their satisfaction in putting words on paper and getting out their deepest feelings (as though that were some sort of certification of the authenticity of their work). It became perfectly clear that their writing had its uses as an alternative to tranquilizers and maybe as social welfare, since it kept them off the streets at night—but it was very bad writing.

Sincerity, albeit deeply felt and entirely honest, is just not enough. The makers of the British anti-Vietnam film, *Tell Me Lies,* were prone to the same misconception as my students at the writers' conference. Renata Adler, the New York *Times*'s intelligent film reviewer, reported of the actors:

> They more or less improvise for two hours, speak and act out their feelings about Vietnam and civil rights. A good part of the time they look agonized and face the camera. There can be no question of their sincerity. The only question is what sincerity uninformed by any sort of intelligence can mean. It is as though, confronted by an ambiguous and difficult world, instead of keeping their minds intact and struggling with complications, they have chosen to regard the world as simple, and go mindless.

Tell Me Lies, then, stands as an example of what happens when earnest people, instead of undertaking the laborious business of grappling with reality and with their own imaginations and thus, perhaps, turning out a piece of art, choose to dump upon us a batch of slogans jazzed up by some more or less interesting technique. It is not a problem of a want of good intentions or even of talent, but of stamina. Jean-Luc Godard's film, *Weekend,* offers a spectacular case of a brilliant director who appears to believe that all the world's ills can be handled with the weapon of cinematic

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gimmickry. Powerful weapon though it is in his hands, it still cannot suffice.

The present popularity of "personal journalism" also invites its own kind of self-indulgence. A particularly unfortunate example of a reputable journalist being undone by what appears to have been an excess of faith in his own sincerity, especially when combined with a fashionably helter-skelter technique of reporting, not so different from improvisation, may be seen in John Hersey's book about the 1967 Detroit riots—*The Algiers Motel Incident.* Hersey is certainly not guilty of commercialism; he is an honest and proven reporter with the highest motives. But in this latest work, written out of the highest motives and with no thought for profit, he seems to use his own involvement as an excuse for not turning his materials into a whole—and instead delivered them to us unfinished, not to say half-baked.

The giveaway in this instance comes at the beginning of the second chapter, where Hersey wrote:

> At this point in the narrative, enter myself. Reluctantly. I have always, before this, stayed out of my journalism, even as a manipulative pronoun, having believed that it sufficed for a writer to "come through" to the reader—by the nature of his selections from the whole, his filtering of all that had gone through his eyes and ears and mind; by the intensity of feeling that might be read in the lines; by his "voice." But this account is too urgent, too complex, too dangerous to too many people to be told in a way that might leave doubts strewn along its path; I cannot afford, this time, the luxury of invisibility.

The defense cannot stand analysis. Invisibility on this subject imposed no loss of any sort; it was called for. The author played no part in the Detroit riots. Unlike Norman Mailer at the Pentagon and the conventions, Hersey was not there. But now, after the fact, by giving himself a part, by presenting himself to the reader as John Hersey, the concerned, passionate, sincere writer, the very conscience of white America, he is copping a plea. It is as though he were asking us to forgive him in advance for any inadequacies on the ground that he is too caught up in the terrible events to fuss with the workaday craft of putting together a book. Not that he was lazy. He collected reams of notes from interviews and court records—some powerful, some scarcely relevant, many

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raising more questions than they answer—and he asks us to accept them the way an acquaintance asks us to accept a check, because we know him to be a fine fellow. Only, as sometimes happens between the best of friends, the check bounces.

May the gods of psychology frown on me if I am suggesting that there is anything unhealthy about anyone being sincere or obtaining internal rewards from his labors. People in the arts, the mass media, even in advertising, that illegitimate offspring of a questionable line, work hard, and nobody but a bloody scoundrel would wish to deprive them of the satisfactions of what they like to call creativity. But the allure of such satisfactions can be treacherous. The work *is* fun work; it opens up possibilities for one's facility and inventiveness; it provides that old emotional kick; in addition to which it can pay off—and money has a way of making one feel better about oneself, which feeling, if one is not fastidious, may be interpreted as good conscience. The audience applauds technical flair more enthusiastically than it applauds substance, and applause has a tendency to divert even those who claim not to prize it away from sober toil. One finds oneself oohing and ahing over the exciting new TV commercials, neglecting to note that they are inseparable from the silly programs—two symptoms of the one malaise. It is as though one were catering a banquet, and all the trappings were of surpassing elegance and the service was exquisite, only the food was terrible.

What is fatal for a writer, Edmund Wilson told us some years ago, is to be brilliant at a disgraceful job. Never has brilliance come so cheap as it does today. Never have the fatally stricken—writers, painters, mere TV directors—thrived so. Never have they had so many fascinating toys to play with, such an audience so eager to be entertained, so much time and space at their disposal. Never has it been easier for them to interpret an hour's exhilaration as the proof of creativity. Never has the marketplace of the arts depended so much on noise and commotion and posturing, and never has it been so deficient in the discipline that precedes art.

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Best Seller

X. J. Kennedy

The copy we'd sent off for on its rounds
Growing dog-eared, the pack of us in there
Saw ourselves whipped and, smarting from our wounds,
Took to our legs and bayed. In Courthouse Square
Faster and faster till the dust clouds spun
Our spastic school bus driver gunned his bus
On finding out that he had put him in
And made him out the one whole man of us.

So mad we hitched a scarecrow to a limb,
Set it afire and tore its britches down,
We could light on no name too low for him,
That is, until the guided tour hit town,
Bought dollar tickets to the chickencoop
Old Wylie'd rigged to pass off for the scene
Of the big strangling, ate our tall tales up
And guzzled us bone dry of gasoline.

Well. This was different. So we nailed a board
To show where he'd been born and in what year,
Rooted a stunty peach tree in the yard
Where Elfa bites the skinflint in the ear

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In chapter four; ate crow, passed round the hat
And set a granite skullcap on the head
Of Scholar Alpaugh's statue—did all that
To put things more in line with how he'd said.

We might have known. The nameplate of the town
High on the firehouse wall has flaked so dim
You have to squint at it. We'd take it down
And paint it fresh, but, on account of him,
We're written up in guidebooks now, and stuck.
We ghost about the daylight feeling thin,
Like stolen bones that ought to be put back.
Only one train, now, bothers with our track.

Hot nights, sleep holding off, in the one bar,
Called Elfa's Nest, chairs propped up to the wall,
Watching the ash of Horace Coe's cigar
Hang on like one last rubberneck's eyeball,
We don't talk much. The whole town's on a shelf
Thick under webs no hand's about to muss.
Just the wind making echoes to itself,
The wind, the cold wind goes on fingering us.

✪ X. J. KENNEDY's books include *Nude Descending a Staircase,* a collection of his poems, and *An Introduction to Poetry.*

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Toward a New Civil War Revisionism

JOHN S. ROSENBERG

"THE CIVIL WAR," Robert Penn Warren has written, "is our only 'felt' history—history lived in the national imagination." In a fundamental sense it was not the "Second American Revolution," as Charles Beard maintained, it was the first; "we became a nation," as Warren stated, "only with the Civil War." It is our Civil War, not our war of separation from Great Britain, which has proved more durable as the source of our national identity; it is really Lincoln the savior, not Washington the founder, who personifies America. It is not surprising, then, that the way each generation has viewed our national epic has been inextricably bound up with the way it viewed the nation. Consequently, each generation has felt impelled to reinterpret the Civil War to itself and for itself.

Two of the major influences in this continual reinterpretation have been the issues of race and war; the manner in which not only professional historians but also the public at large have viewed these twin themes has had a great deal to do with the way they understood and evaluated the Civil War. Thus, two of the major interpretations of this century were profoundly affected by contemporary attitudes toward the Negro and toward American participation in the two world wars. One was written by a generation whose outlook was heavily influenced by the war of 1917 and its aftermath and which was largely indifferent to the problems of American Negroes; the other was written by the following generation, which had learned a different lesson from its experiences with World War II and the cold war and which showed greater concern for the conditions of Negroes in this country. Since the war in Vietnam and the domestic racial crisis are having a major impact on the outlook of a new generation, it would be surprising

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if another interpretation of the Civil War did not emerge. It is my intention to suggest the form such a new interpretation might take.

The interpretation that came to be known as "revisionist" challenged the popular Beardian view that the Civil War resulted from an irreconcilable economic clash, and it also rejected the earlier nationalist view that the war was an inevitable conflict between slavery and freedom. The leading advocates of the revisionist position, Avery O. Craven and James G. Randall, both shared in the widespread disillusionment with war that followed World War I. "Just as Americans beginning about 1935 executed something like an about face in their interpretation of the World War," wrote Randall in 1940, "so the retelling of the Civil War is a matter of changed and changing viewpoints. In the present troubled age," he continued, "it may be of more than academic interest to re-examine the human beings of that war generation with less thought of the 'splendor of battle flags' and with more of the sophisticated and unsentimental searchlight of reality."

Randall's writing reveals a profound disgust for war. "For the very word 'war,' " he claimed, "the realist would have to substitute some such term as 'organized murder' or 'human slaughterhouse.' " He criticized most writings about war because in them "the war is offstage in that its stench and hideousness do not appear." Although he was not as outspoken on this issue as Randall, Craven agreed that war was seldom justified. "Those who force the settlement of human problems by war," he wrote, "can expect only an unsympathetic hearing from the future. Mere desire to do 'right' is no defense at the bar of history."

The revisionists criticized the previous interpretations for assuming that the differences between the sections were irreconcilable and hence that man was incapable of avoiding the catastrophe of war. Thus, Randall's concern with "the human beings" of the war generation and Craven's criticism of "those who forced" the antagonism to the point of war reflected their belief that the war was caused by people and not by an irreconcilable conflict over basic issues. In his first major article, Craven charged that "differences—economic, social, and political—did not then [in 1825] or

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afterwards portend an 'irrepressible conflict' between North and South, to be settled only by bloodshed. The War Between the States in 1861-65 did not come simply because one section was agricultural and the other industrial; because one exploited free labor and the other slaves; or because a sectional majority refused to respect the constitutional rights of a minority!" Unlike Randall, Craven did believe that the sections were divided by economic interests, but he did not believe that these differences alone could have produced war.

For the revisionists to make their case that the differences between the sections were not basic enough to cause war, it was necessary for them to challenge the centrality of slavery. Randall did this by pointing out that the principal disputes were over runaway slaves and the extension of slavery into the territories. He thought that the numbers involved were too insignificant to lead to war (the census of 1860 listed eight hundred and three runaway slaves and two slaves in the Kansas territory) and that the whole question "was magnified into an issue altogether out of scale with its importance." Craven drew a distinction between slavery as a reality and slavery as a symbol. Of these two quite different slaveries, the first was economic and the second was psychological. And it was the psychological one that caused the trouble: "The first could be almost ignored in our study of sectional conflict had it not become the symbol of all sectional differences; the second leaves few pages of history from 1830 to 1860 untouched."

"Slavery," Craven thought, "was not a major economic fact in Southern life" or even the controlling factor in the life of the Negro. "The fact of his status as a slave may, in the main, be ignored. He should be thought of, first, only as a different racial element in the society. . . ." Slavery offered both advantages and disadvantages; there was little unusual about it. "What owning and being owned added to the usual relationship between employer and employee, it is difficult to say." In addition to his physical freedom and the right to drift aimlessly, Craven wrote, the slave was deprived of such things as "the dignity of responsibility and the stimulation of worry." His life partner was often chosen for him, which made his plight in that respect "as bad as

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that of European royalty but only a trifle worse than that of the rural whites. . . ." Slavery as a reality, then, was not really so bad and hence could not have produced a sectional conflict.

It is important to recognize the subtle but significant difference between Randall's and Craven's approach to the problem of slavery. As Professor David Potter has noted, "where Craven discounted the significance of slavery as an institution, Randall minimized its significance as an issue. One of his [Randall's] most effective arguments was his contention that, while the broad issue of freedom versus slavery may be worth a war, the issue as defined by the opposing forces in 1861 was not that broad, and was not worth a war in the form in which they defined it; for the Republicans in 1861 did not propose to emancipate the slaves, they even agreed in 1861 to guarantee slavery in the existing slave states and to return fugitive slaves to slavery."

In short, the revisionists did not believe that the war was caused by slavery or any other irreconcilable differences between the sections. Craven concluded that the conflict was made of "emotions, cultivated hostilities, and ultimately of hatred between the sections." This hatred was produced not by the wounds, which were slight, but by the salt of controversy poured on them: "Differences were but the materials with which passions worked. . . . The conflict was the work of politicians and pious cranks! The people knew little of each other as realities. They were both fighting mythical devils." Thus Craven traced the outbreak of hostilities to inept political leaders and fanatics who magnified what real divisions there were out of all proportion. "The move for an independent South which came to a climax in 1861 did not arise from permanent physical and social conditions," Craven wrote in 1939. "It sprang rather from temporary factors cultivated both without and within the section." Randall went so far as to claim that wars were never caused by basic issues. "One of the most colossal of misconceptions," he argued, "is the theory that fundamental motives produce war. The glaring and obvious fact is the artificiality of war-making agitation."

Where previous interpretations had explained the increase of emotionalism and the appearance of extremists as the result of the

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sectional conflict, of the historical situation itself, Craven and Randall viewed them as the cause of the conflict. The fatal crime the revisionists attributed to these "fanatics" and "demagogic politicians" was that they transformed real and concrete issues into abstractions, and hence presumably into the unreal. "What were but normal differences in the beginning of the period thus gradually became principle." Throughout revisionism runs the theme that principles, morals and abstractions were the wrench the fanatics threw into the works of democracy; the democratic process, so well equipped to handle "real" issues, was torn asunder when the dangerous and unnecessary questions of right and wrong were forced upon it. Thus, a "needless war" resulted when the "blundering generation" allowed "their short-sighted politicians, their over-zealous editors, and their pious reformers to emotionalize real and potential differences and to conjure up distorted impressions of those who dwelt in other parts of the nation." They turned "normal American conflicts" into "a struggle of civilizations."

Although the revisionists were nominally critical of the extremists in both sections, they usually reserved their most bitter condemnation for those in the North. The South is generally pictured as responding to external attack, its extremists spawned by those of the North. Craven, for example, was consistently more critical of the reformers than of the evils they were trying to correct. Claiming that the abolitionist movement "arose out of the apprehensions engendered by changes going on in the immediate environment of the reformers," he noted that historians were becoming "less inclined to grant unstinted praise to the fanatic and [are] not certain about the value of his contribution." In fact, Craven went so far as to wonder "if the developments of history might not have been more sound without him." Randall, too, seemed to single out the abolitionists, noting that their "avenging force of puritanism in politics" was "a major cause of the conflict." But in assessing guilt for the cardinal sin of substituting abstractions for realities, Craven employed a double standard. While he believed the abolitionists guilty of introducing questions of morality into politics and converting concrete issues into prin-

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ciples, Craven had a warm spot in his heart for Robert E. Lee, who, we are told, "chose to yield deeply held convictions regarding immediate concrete issues in order to stand by those intangible, yet more profound values which had to do with honor, with self-respect, and with duty."

From the 1930's onward revisionism enjoyed wide acceptance in the historical profession and society at large. It partially resulted from and appealed to a general disillusionment with war, and it also reflected a disappointment and loss of faith in the United States that was prevalent among intellectuals in the depressed thirties. Many believed that the immediate results of the Civil War, and even the society they lived in, did not justify the terrible sacrifices that had been necessary to achieve them. Randall spoke of "the hateful results of the war" and claimed that "the triumph of the Union was spoiled by the manner in which victory was used." Craven looked around at the United States in 1939 and saw "Workers talking of 'wage slavery,' capitalists piling fortunes high while poverty and starvation stalk the streets. . . . To such ends did three decades of quarreling and four years of bitter warfare make substantial contributions."

As late as 1950, Kenneth Stampp, an historian who seemed to share some of the revisionists' assumptions about war, closed his study of the secession crisis with the strong implication that the Civil War had been a disaster unmitigated by the bestowal of formal freedom on the slaves. According to Stampp, the conflict had ended "with the rich richer and the slaves only half free. Nationalists," he concluded bitterly, "might rejoice that the Union was preserved. But what the Yankees achieved—for their generation at least—was a triumph not of middle-class ideals but of middle-class vices. The most striking products of their crusade were the shoddy aristocracy of the North and the ragged children of the South. Among the masses of Americans there were no victors, only the vanquished." But despite this pessimistic conclusion, Stampp maintained that "Unless the concept of 'national interest' is reevaluated, their [that of the generation of 1861] decision, their choice of war rather than peace, must be accepted as just and right."

In 1950, when Stampp wrote, there was no sign that Ameri-

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cans were about to reevaluate the concept, or the sanctity, of their national interest. Americans tend to view themselves as the polar opposites of their enemies. Consequently, the experience of opposition both to the total evil of Nazi Germany and to the current cold war with another system of total evil, Stalinist Russia, tended to confirm the view that the American nation, whatever its minor flaws, was the embodiment of all the noble Western values. Perhaps America was not perfect, but it was certainly better than any alternative that had appeared. Fired by the hot war against Hitler and tempered by the cold one against Stalin, a new generation came to hold attitudes about America and about war that were strikingly at odds with those held by the generation of the thirties. Thus, the Civil War came to be celebrated as a necessary step on the way to a more perfect democracy and a more powerful nation. It was now assumed without question that the very existence of the country must be protected at all costs, by any means. A generation that had sanctioned the use of atomic weapons to speed the already certain defeat of the Japanese was not likely to quarrel with the use of war as a legitimate means of securing national objectives, and certainly not as a means of preserving the nation itself.

This resurgence of patriotism and renewed acceptance of war inevitably came to be reflected in the historical profession. In his presidential address to the American Historical Association in 1951, Samuel Eliot Morison commented favorably on this shift of attitudes. "There is," he said, "a decided change of attitude toward our past, a friendly, almost affectionate attitude. . . ." He had harsh words for those historians who, "caught in the disillusion that followed World War I, ignored wars, belittled wars, taught that no war was necessary and no war did any good, even to the victor." Instead of criticizing war, Morison urged, historians should point out that "war does accomplish something, that war is better than servitude, that war has been an inescapable aspect of the human story."

These post-World War II historians, whom Professor Thomas Pressly has called the "new nationalists," had themselves supported and participated in America's involvement in what they

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considered a just war. Believing from their own experience that wars were caused by very real ideological conflicts, they rejected the revisionist contention that "artificial agitation" was always the primary cause. Criticizing the revisionists for ignoring moral confrontation in history, these historians stressed the necessity for moral choice, both on the part of historical actors and historians themselves. Since the intractability of evil in the world made conflict a moral necessity, those so-called "moderates" who tried to effect compromises were nothing more than appeasers. As Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., the most articulate of the new nationalists, stated the problem of conflict and compromise: "The issue here posed—what policy would have averted war—goes down to the question we formulate today [1947] in terms of appeasement or resistance." Predictably, the new nationalists vigorously denounced the Crittenden Compromise, the last major effort at sectional conciliation.

Senator Crittenden of Kentucky had proposed a series of unamendable Constitutional amendments to protect slavery in the states where it existed and in the District of Columbia, to guarantee it beneath the line of 36°30′, and to exclude it above that line. According to Professor Harold Hyman, "kudos for Crittenden's formula calls for conviction that any peace is better than any war." This "ignominious capitulation" could not be preferred over the Republicans' policy of firmness "unless prejudgement exists that anything is preferable to confrontation." Schlesinger similarly rules out compromise: "A society closed in defense of evil institutions," he wrote, "creates moral differences far too profound to be solved by compromise." The revisionists, he claimed, did not face the "hard fact" that "closed and authoritarian social systems tend to create a compulsive intransigence in their own ruling groups and that these groups may respond much more to a firmness which wakens them to some sense of actuality than to a forbearance which is never great enough and always to be discounted." One is tempted to conclude that Schlesinger and Hyman share a prejudgment that, where profound moral differences exist, any war is better than any peace.

In an influential article published in *Partisan Review* in 1949,

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Schlesinger mounted a sustained attack against revisionism. He argued that historians need moral sensitivity as much as objectivity to understand the past. "By denying themselves insight into the moral dimension of the slavery crisis," he contended, "the revisionists denied themselves a historical understanding of the intensities that caused the slavery crisis." By failing to recognize the significance of moral outrage, in other words, the revisionists were led to false conclusions about the war's causation. "Because the revisionists felt no moral outrage themselves, they deplored as fanatics those who did feel it, or brushed aside their feelings as the artificial product of emotion and propaganda."

Reintroducing moral outrage into the historical process, Schlesinger made a persuasive argument that indignation and emotion are no more "artificial" than anything else. Since "sometimes there is no escape from the implacabilities of moral decision," the abolitionists could not refrain—and hence should not be blamed for not refraining—from vehemently attacking slavery. "If revisionism has based itself on the conviction that things would have been different if only there had been no abolitionists, it has forgotten that abolitionism was as definite and irrevocable a factor in the historical situation as was slavery itself." Revealing the influence of his own experiences, he concluded that "To say that there 'should' have been no abolitionists in America before the Civil War is about as sensible as to say that there 'should' have been no anti-Nazis in the nineteen-thirties or that there 'should' be no anti-Communists today."

But Schlesinger did more than defend the abolitionists. In addition to defending their antislavery feelings, and the actions based on them, he justified the war they helped to produce. For the revisionists, the war was "needless" and "repressible" because the sectional conflict was not fundamental or necessary but was instead the artificial product of agitation by irrational extremists and a "blundering generation" of politicians. For Schlesinger, the war was an inevitable conflict between Good and Evil. Where the revisionists claimed that the debate over slavery in the territories was an "unreal" or "magnified" one about an imaginary slave in an impossible place, Schlesinger and the new nationalists com-

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pared the territories to Poland and the South to Germany. Schlesinger, for example, argued that, "The democracies could not challenge fascism inside Germany any more than opponents of slavery could challenge slavery inside the South, but the extension of slavery, like the extension of fascism, was an act of aggression which made a moral choice inescapable." And since resistance was preferable to appeasement, war was the only moral choice: the Civil War was "an 'irrepressible conflict,' " Schlesinger wrote, "and hence a justified one."

The new nationalists substituted a commitment to the moral necessity of war for the revisionists' disillusionment with it, and they heaped praise on the abolitionists' vigorous opposition to evil in place of the revisionists' criticism of their irrational extremism. Consequently, it is not unfair to say that the new nationalists, unlike the revisionists, believed, in words made famous by Senator Goldwater in another context, that "moderation in pursuit of justice is no virtue, and extremism in defense of liberty is no vice." Or, as Oscar Handlin put it, "There surely is a difference between a fanatic for freedom and a fanatic for slavery."

Schlesinger's interpretation reflected the outlook of liberal veterans of World War II and the cold war, but a new generation that has rejected so much of the affectionate attitude toward our past noted by Morison is likely to find this liberal version of our Civil War increasingly inadequate. As we move into the second century of the post-Civil War era, the lingering plight of American Negroes and the destructive impact of American nationalism on the rest of the world seriously challenge the justification of the Civil War—that it freed the slaves and preserved the nation—and calls for a new revisionism.

This new revisionism, it must be pointed out, is not really history at all; it is a new way of *evaluating* the Civil War, not of explaining it. Most historians are not willing to engage themselves in this kind of thinking. They are willing to explore the question of whether those who participated in the war or those who lived after the war but before the present felt it was justified, but they generally are reluctant to consider whether the war was justified or unjustified on the basis of what they think of America

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in 1969. Even if this were acceptable behavior on the part of professional historians, ordinary citizens surely need not recognize the scholarly injunction to refrain from personally judging and evaluating the past. Especially now, when an increasing number of young people are deeply concerned with the problem of justifying war, it is worthwhile to examine the justifiability of a war nearly all Americans regard as just.

Indeed, few historians themselves recognize their own injunction not to evaluate the past; the only difference is that their evaluations are usually unconscious. As the philosopher William Dray has pointed out, the historians' debate about the inevitability of the war has really been a debate about its justifiability. The core of these disputes has not been whether the war *could* have been avoided, but whether it *should* have been. "What they are quarreling about is surely the stand to be taken on a moral issue," Dray writes. "That issue is whether war with one's fellow countrymen is a greater moral evil than acquiescence in political and economic domination, or in the continuance of an institution like chattel slavery"—or, one might add, than peaceful separation.

The former revisionists, believing as they did that the war was unjustified, purported to show that it could have been avoided, and hence they blamed the entire generation for not avoiding it. A new revisionism, however, would not attempt a new historical explanation of the war; instead, it would openly be concerned with the manner in which Americans today view it. It would not blame the men of 1861 for a catastrophe that was probably beyond their capacity to avoid. Their problem was not that they were "blundering," but that they were normal; to have avoided war under the circumstances would have been heroic. A new revisionism, then, would challenge the prevalent assumption that that catastrophe was a worthwhile and justifiable sacrifice. Thus, a new revisionism would be concerned with current attitudes and not with the old question of historical inevitability. It is one thing to recognize that historical actors in many situations cannot reasonably be expected to have acted other than they did, but it is quite another to celebrate their actions as the new nationalists do. One may differ with the revisionists and *excuse* the men of 1861 with-

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out accepting the attempt of the new nationalists to *justify* their decision. One may empathize with them—a generation hopelessly entangled in a web of nationalism and slavery—and still severely criticize those historians who today view the war as a Good Thing. One may believe, as I do, that the Civil War—or more accurately, a civil war—was unavoidable and still believe that it was a tragedy that cannot be justified either by contemporary war aims or by the results it achieved. A new revisionism, then, would not deduce justifiability from inevitability as Schlesinger does.

Since a new revisionism would be openly presentist, would be concerned with evaluation from hindsight, the issue is not whether civil war in principle is a greater moral evil than slavery or secession, but whether the actual Civil War that occurred should be justified because of what it prevented or achieved. The two issues involved were slavery and union. The new nationalists claim that the Civil War was justified to abolish one and preserve the other; a new revisionism would argue that it was not. It would argue, first, that the mere preservation of the American nation against the will of a large number of its inhabitants does not justify any sacrifices, and, second, that the limited improvement in the status of the Negro in this country was not worth the expenditure in lives required to make that improvement possible.

Generally, those who justify the Civil War do so on the grounds that it freed the slaves, not that it saved the Union. If the war had ended "prematurely," and thus left slavery intact, presumably they would not now justify it. This was the position taken by most abolitionists, a number of whom, in fact, did fear that the war would end before the slaves were freed. But there were also a number of abolitionists who remained pacifists despite their hatred of slavery, or who were not pacifists but still would not support a war for the preservation of the Union on the mere possibility that the slaves would be freed in the process. Consequently, I think the crucial question the Civil War presents today to all who are not simple nationalists is whether its results have vindicated the many abolitionists who supported it or the few who did not.

Those today who justify the war predictably claim the results

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have vindicated its supporters. Despite their recognition that the official war aim was merely the preservation of the Union, those abolitionists who supported the war, such as William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips, did so because of their assumption, which proved correct, that winning the war would require emancipation. Despite their previous advocacy of disunion, they did an abrupt about-face when Fort Sumter was fired on. A pacifist until the war broke out, Garrison announced after Sumter: "All my sympathies and wishes are with the government, because it is entirely in the right, and acting strictly in self-defense and for self-preservation." Accused of inconsistency, he replied, "Well, ladies and gentlemen, when I said I would not sustain the Constitution because it was 'a covenant with death and an agreement with hell,' I had no idea I would live to see death and hell secede. Hence it is that I am now with the government to enable it to constitutionally stop the further ravages of death, and to extinguish the ravishes of hell." The North, cleansed of all its corruption and left virtuous by the South's secession, was thus engaged in a noble crusade.

These abolitionists knew that the government's only purpose was to save the Union, and their abandonment of disunion was not based exclusively on regard for the Negro's welfare; after Sumter they shared in the general surge of patriotic fervor that swept the North. Thus, in his famous speech announcing support for the war, Wendell Phillips stated that he believed "in the possibility of justice, in the certainty of Union." The American flag, which he said had previously represented slavery and oppression, had come to represent "sovereignty and justice," presumably in that order. Phillips, no longer thinking there was a conflict between union and freedom, became a staunch unionist. "Do you suppose I am not Yankee enough to buy Union when I can have it at a fair price?" he asked those who accused him of compromising his principles.

There were some abolitionists, however, who either were not Yankee enough or who did not think the price of war was fair, and a new revisionism would support their position. Lydia Maria Child, one of the most sensitive and perceptive people in this

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group, felt there was little "of either right principle, or good feeling, at the foundation of this unanimous Union sentiment." In addition to being upset because her husband had been almost mobbed at a Union meeting for suggesting that the government should help the slaves, she was dismayed at Lincoln's stated intention of not interfering with slavery where it existed and with General Butler's offer to use his Massachusetts troops to put down any slave rebellion in Maryland. "In view of these things," she wrote, "the Union-shouts, and hurrahs for the U. S. flag, sound like fiendish mockery in my ears." George Bassett, an Illinois abolitionist, could not support the war because "It is not a war for Negro liberty, but for national despotism." In a similar vein, an ex-Garrisonian at Yale was disturbed that "Abolitionists and Disunionists of thirty years' standing should now be found lending pen and voice to uphold and urge on a war waged solely and avowedly to preserve and perpetuate the Union. . . . Is anyone so blind as to fancy that the capitalists, who last winter were mobbing Mr. Phillips, have now struck hands with him for a crusade against slavery . . . ?"

The disillusionment and despair of these abolitionists were heightened by the fact that many of their former colleagues seemed to become themselves more interested in saving the Union than in freeing the slaves. Moncure Conway, whom some Eastern abolitionists had sent to England to represent their position, learned of the swelling nationalism among his colleagues the hard way. When it was learned that he had naïvely informed the Confederate envoy that the abolitionists would withdraw their support from the war if the Confederacy would free the slaves, he was soundly denounced in the North. Repudiating their envoy, the Boston *Commonwealth* and the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* announced that "the anti-slavery men will not sanction any proposal that included a recognition of the Confederacy." Conway was so crushed when he learned that many former abolitionists would prosecute the war even if slavery were not an issue that he abandoned not only the war but the United States itself and decided to stay in England. "It never entered my mind," he wrote his wife, "that any leading anti-slavery man wd question the principle in-

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volved—wd in any way support the war simply for conquest or Union whether Liberty were or were not involved. The wholesale slaughter of men is vile enough anyway; but to slaughter them except for the holiest cause is *worse* than treason to any government that does it."

In short, there were abolitionists who thought the North's cause was less than holy. Certainly at the time there was much to support their position, for there can be no doubt that the official purpose of the war, at least initially, was exclusively to save the Union. Even the New York *Tribune* declared that "this war is in truth a war for the preservation of the Union, not for the destruction of slavery. . . . We believe that slavery has nothing to fear from a Union triumph." Lincoln stated repeatedly that he had no intention of interfering with slavery, and the widely respected Springfield (Mass.) *Republican* wrote that "If there is one point of honor upon which more than another this administration will stick, it is its pledge not to interfere with slavery in the states." As late as August, 1862, Lincoln was precise and unequivocal as to his purpose. In his famous public reply to Horace Greeley's advocacy of emancipation, the President who would be known as the Great Emancipator wrote: "My paramount objective in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slaves I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that."

But, as we all know and as the pro-war abolitionists had predicted, Lincoln did decide that he had to free the slaves, or rather some of them, in order to save the Union (indeed, his letter to Greeley was written exactly one month after he wrote the first draft of the Emancipation Proclamation).* Even so, in retrospect it appears that those abolitionists who refused to follow Garrison and Phillips into active support of the war showed the greater

* The Proclamation applied only to those areas in the South still at war with the United States, not to those under federal control. It was said at the time that Lincoln freed the slaves only where he did not have the power to do so. As the London *Spectator* dryly observed, the underlying principle was "not that a human being cannot justly own another, but that he cannot own him unless he is loyal to the United States."

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wisdom, for the motives behind abolition and the Reconstruction amendments had serious effects on the quality of freedom thereby bestowed. It was obvious to many that freedom granted purely for the purpose of military necessity would be severely limited. As Lydia Maria Child accurately predicted in 1862, before the Emancipation Proclamation had been proclaimed, "Even should [the slaves] be emancipated, merely as a 'war necessity,' everything *must* go wrong, if there is no heart or conscience on the subject."

Just as there was no conscience in emancipation, so there was little in the Reconstruction legislation. The First Reconstruction Act, as C. Vann Woodward has recently written, "was not primarily devised for the protection of Negro rights and the provision of Negro equality. Its primary purpose, however awkwardly and poorly implemented, was to put the Southern States under the control of men loyal to the Union. . . ."

Indeed, as Woodward indicates, there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that the primary concern of most Reconstruction legislators was with whites in the North, not blacks in the South. It was feared that unless the freedom of the ex-slaves was secured in the South they would swarm over the North in search of it. There is even evidence that suggests that those who drafted the Fifteenth Amendment were more concerned with securing Republican majorities in the North (where most states still refused to enfranchise Negroes) than civil rights for Negroes in the South. This is not to deny that there was some sincere support for Negro rights, but, as Woodward points out, "it was not the antislavery idealists who shaped the Fifteenth Amendment and guided it through Congress. The effective leaders of legislative action were moderates with practical political considerations in mind—particularly that thin margin of difference in partisan voting strength in certain Northern states." The Fifteenth Amendment has often been seen as the crowning success of idealistic Northern war aims. But read more carefully, as Woodward concludes, it "reveals more deviousness than clarity of purpose, more partisan needs than idealistic aims, more timidity than boldness." Thus, if we are to justify the Civil War because it led to Reconstruction, our justi-

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fication must be based on the legal possibilities Reconstruction created for future generations, not what it actually achieved or even tried to achieve for the slaves, whom it only partially freed.

What little progress Negroes have been allowed to achieve has occurred almost exclusively in the past fifteen years. There is no doubt that the achievements of what Woodward calls the Second Reconstruction would have been a great deal more difficult without those of the First, but are those achievements enough to justify the ravages of our Civil War? The question is not whether Negroes are better off today than they would have been had there been no war. We may assume that they are. The question is whether the quantity and quality of freedom our society has been willing to grant is valuable enough to justify the death of one man for every six slaves who were freed. Everyone must work out his own equation for the moral calculus of war, his own formula to match ends with means. It is worth pointing out, however, that liberals generally object to sacrificing one generation for the possible benefit of the next, at least when other societies do it. It is no secret that real freedom for the Negro remained much more of a promise, or a hope, than a reality for nearly a century after the Civil War. Since Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., justified the war primarily as a noble fight for freedom, it is difficult to understand how he could have been so optimistic about the results in 1949 when he wrote his article in *Partisan Review*. One wonders what examples of Negro freedom, what applications and affirmations of the Fourteenth Amendment, so inspired him that he was able to look with favor on a war that had sacrificed six hundred thousand lives on the altar of that freedom.

I have no illusions about the Negroes' fate had they not been freed by the war, and it could reasonably be argued that I would not question the efficacy or the morality of the war if I were black. Perhaps. But certainly there are many black militants today who feel no gratitude toward their emancipators, nor should they. They argue quite effectively that it would have been much better for all concerned if the slaves had seized their freedom rather than received it in bits and pieces as a result of quarrels among their oppressors. Our image of the "Sambo personality" and the happy,

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docile slave reinforces our skepticism that a successful slave revolt could have occurred, but no one can be sure of what might have been. As Eugene Genovese has pointed out, slaves in Saint Domingue were described in the same fashion as Southern Sambos, until, that is, they rose up in the greatest slave revolt in history. If, as Genovese suggests, the French Jacobins had taken power in 1790 instead of 1794 and the slaves had been freed "as the result of the vicissitudes of Jacobin-Girondist factionalism," there would now be Haitian scholars attempting to explain the black's docility in the face of oppression.

This is not, of course, to suggest that there would have been a slave rebellion, but it does suggest that we are foolish if we assume that "it couldn't happen here." Even if slavery or some modified form of oppression (but what have we had if not modified oppression?) had lasted well into the twentieth century, there is no reason to assume that it would have lasted forever. The blacks would certainly have shared in the wave of anticolonial feelings that has swept up other oppressed peoples in this century. Indeed, they are sharing in it even though supposedly freed. Even if an independent South resembled South Africa (which is unlikely since there has been cultural interdependence between the races in the South), there is room to question whether the difference between the conditions of Negro life in America and South Africa is so great as to justify over half a million deaths. Are we so accustomed to organized violence that we automatically accept without question the conclusion that the Civil War was justified even though it merely loosened the shackles of slavery? Can we be so sure that the privilege of moving from the plantation to the ghetto is worth the death and destruction of a brutal war?

It could be argued that even though emancipation has not been complete, it nevertheless was a necessary preliminary to any future progress. It is true, of course, that history will not end this year, but this bit of knowledge is of limited value in evaluating the war. The argument of future progress—that the results of emancipation are not yet known—requires an optimism about the future that America's treatment of the blacks in the past and present does not support. Moreover, the further into the future

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one projects this potential progress, the more difficult it becomes to argue that such progress would have been impossible but for emancipation in 1865.

Another argument against a new revisionism is that the Civil War can be justified by what it prevented, if not by what it achieved. But one need not argue that Negroes are no better off because of the war; the question is whether there has been enough real, as opposed to merely legal, improvement to justify the terrible sacrifices required to achieve it. Even admitting that the Negroes' plight has lessened, however, it is hard to say how much of that improvement is simply the seepage of industrial development and our involvement in two world wars. And it is highly unlikely that the spread of slavery into the territories or the South's peaceful secession would have thwarted forever the development of industrialism and technology. It is possible that emancipation in 1865 speeded up the process, but that is a far different matter from saying that improvement in the Negroes' condition would have been impossible without the Civil War. It is certainly possible to imagine other paths to the present and future (or another present and future) which, although they may have been worse than the one we have followed, would not have been enough worse to make up for the many who involuntarily paid for the difference with their lives.

The only other justification for the Civil War, that it preserved the American Union, is less difficult to deal with. Ever since the Puritans attempted to build their City on a Hill, Americans have assumed that their country was morally set off from Europe; commentators on our national character have all pointed to the qualities of innocence and virtuousness, of freedom from the guilt and corruption of the Old World, in Americans' conceptions of themselves.

Robert Penn Warren has argued that this feeling of moral superiority, the "Treasury of Virtue," as he calls it, derived in large part from the experience of freeing the slaves in the Civil War. Despite the overwhelming evidence that emancipation was merely a by-product of the war, not its purpose, the doctrine of the Treasury of Virtue views the war as a purposeful crusade

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so full of righteousness that there was enough left over to make up for whatever small failings subsequently occurred. "From the start," Warren wrote, "America had had adequate baggage of self-righteousness and phariseeism, but with the Civil War came grace abounding. . . . From the start, Americans had a strong tendency to think of their land as the galahad among nations, and the Civil War, with its happy marriage of victory and virtue, converted this tendency into an article of faith nearly as sacrosanct as the Declaration of Independence." This assumption of American virtue, of American grace in a sinful world, was reinforced by the experience of opposition to the tyrannies of Hitler and Stalin and was reflected in much of the new nationalist historiography.

There is a great paradox in this contemporary liberal view of our history. It is well known that this hardheaded, tough-minded, pragmatic liberalism, the liberalism exemplified by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., is rooted in the moral and philosophical assumptions associated with Reinhold Niebuhr. But along with their pessimistic view of man and tragic view of history, derived from Niebuhr, these liberals incongruously link a highly sanguine and favorable view of the United States. According to Niebuhr, it is all but impossible for societies to act morally, but according to this liberal version of our history the United States has nearly always done so. Where the Niebuhrian universe is filled with fallible men, insoluble moral problems, and complex societies where good and evil (but mostly evil) are woven inextricably together, Schlesinger's liberalism seems to see a history that reveals a virtuous, perfectible America opposing various enemies—the South, Germany, Russia —that are totally evil.

It should be pointed out that Niebuhr's disciples did not depart from his position any more than he did himself. In *Moral Man and Immoral Society* he had written that nations become even more hypocritical than usual in time of war. "In the imagination of the simple patriot the nation is not society but Society. Though its values are relative they appear . . . to be absolute. The religious instinct for the absolute is no less potent in patriotic religion than any other. The nation is always endowed with the

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aura of the sacred. . . ." Niebuhr is no simple patriot, but the impact of war, hot and cold, did bring him under the influence of patriotic religion. As Christopher Lasch has pointed out, Niebuhr, like many others, believed the cold war forced an ultimate choice between "Marxist despotism" and the "open society" of the West. As the leader of the "Free World," America, in short, became "Society," its values absolute, its existence sacred.

Thus, the tough-minded liberal view of the Civil War was informed by an assumption that the hard reality of evil made conflict necessary and by a commitment to the preservation of the United States at all costs. Schlesinger accused the revisionists of being "sentimentalists" who attempted to "escape from the severe demands of moral decision," who believed that "evil will be 'outmoded' by progress and that politics consequently does not impose on us the necessity for decision and for struggle." But this "realism" now seems equally sentimental for believing that total war can be moral and that America is exempt from the fallibility, self-interest, and collective egoism that Niebuhr's outlook attributes to other nations. If the revisionists were sentimentalists for putting their faith in Progress, certainly Niebuhrian liberals are equally sentimental for putting theirs in the United States. If the revisionists were optimistic for believing that the Civil War could be avoided, Schlesinger and his sympathizers are equally optimistic for believing that the forward march of American progress justifies all the sacrifices along the way.

For despite the participants in the American Celebration, the recent behavior of the United States does not inspire certainty that its preservation was worth whatever sacrifices other generations were called on to make. Arguments that nearly any amount of death and suffering one hundred years ago were justified to preserve the United States because of its moral attributes can no longer be maintained, if, indeed, they ever could. It has become clear that we are a nation like all nations, that as a Great Power we are behaving no more morally than have other Great Powers.

Since the Civil War, if not before, the pursuit of national policy has required the abandonment of many national ideals. Born on the proposition that legitimate government requires the

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consent of the governed, the United States nevertheless found it necessary to retain the allegiance of a substantial part of its population by force. Some of the more doctrinaire radicals of the time could not support this effort. "The same principle that has always made me an uncompromising abolitionist," said George Bassett, "now makes me an uncompromising secessionist. It is the great natural and sacred right of self-government." The radicalism of his contemporaries, however, had been replaced by an uncompromising nationalism. There is a revealing parallel between the Northern position in the Civil War and recent American interventions in other civil wars. In both cases there is a professed commitment to the principle of self-determination, but in both cases some attribute of those determining themselves invalidates the principle. In the case of the South, it was the presence of slavery; in our recent interventions, it was the presence of Communists, supposed or real, on one side of the conflict.

Niebuhr has noted the irony involved in this compromising of ideals by both the Communists and the United States, although he thinks the Communists have jettisoned their earlier values far more willingly and completely than has the United States. "Insofar as communism tries to cover the ironic contrast between its original dreams of justice and virtue and its present realities by more and more desperate efforts to prove its tyranny to be 'democracy' and its imperialism to be the achievement of universal peace, it has already dissolved irony into pure evil."

The tyranny of our ghettoes and a "freedom" for Negroes that allows them an equal opportunity only to be killed in a cruel and unjust war have gone a long way toward dissolving America's own irony. For those who are no longer communicants in our patriotic religion, the Civil War begins to appear as a tragedy unjustified by its results. In addition to realizing that war itself is at least as evil as any human or ideological enemy, many Americans have come to deemphasize the significance of merely legal reforms, which have only a limited effect on the quality of most people's lives. Since the former revisionists were not overly concerned with the plight of the Negro, they held that a war over his status was irrational and unnecessary. The new nationalists, on

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the other hand, were keenly sensitive to the immorality of chattel slavery, and they were willing to justify nearly any extreme to eradicate it. But after more than a hundred years of emancipation, over a decade since the Brown decision, and several civil rights laws, it is now apparent that much more than legal change is required to constitute real progress. How naïve it now seems to justify the slaughter of six hundred thousand men for the slim reward of a formalistic and incomplete emancipation. Lydia Maria Child was right: because the nation has not demonstrated much "heart or conscience" on the subject of freedom for the ex-slaves, everything has gone wrong.

It will be apparent that a new revisionism such as the one outlined above would, like all previous interpretations of the Civil War, be firmly rooted in its own time. Consequently, it may be invalidated (indeed, one hopes it will be invalidated) by future developments: if significant gains are made by Negroes, and those gains are seen as dependent upon emancipation in 1865, then perhaps the sacrifices of the war should be regarded as justified. Thus the new revisionism may become as naïve as the new nationalists' interpretation now seems, but unfortunately it does seem appropriate for our own time. Even Lincoln can be called upon to support this view. At Gettysburg, he solemnly requested his audience to join him in resolving ". . . that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that this government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." This government did not perish from the earth, but that new birth of freedom never occurred. Sadly, we must conclude that those dead did die in vain.

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Dolorosa

LYDIA LEE

The air
In the trucks is foul and a hyena
Screams or is it a woman?
What have I to do with these
Wailing women,
Old men with greasy side curls
And covered heads?
I wore a clean shirt every day
And in my coat decent and dark
A fresh flower.

They say a Jew died today, a rabbi,
On a hill upon a cross:
Two planks of badly seasoned wood
Crudely put together; they had him bear it
On his own back to the
Execution site; so practical.

In the camp the clothes
Are folded in tidy piles; all is orderly.

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There is no jostling
In the crowd waiting naked
And quiet for the last
Shower bath.

Do those penitents
Upon their knees before the high altar
Or making the Stations of the Cross
Drop their true tears for You, Jew,
And cast You
In the furnace with the rest?

✪ LYDIA LEE, who was born in South Africa, lives in London. Her work has appeared in English poetry quarterlies.

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On Writers as Court Jesters

GÜNTER GRASS

THEY SELDOM MEET, and then as strangers: I am referring to our overtired politicians and our uncertain writers with their quickly formulated demands that always cry out for immediate fulfillment. Where is the calendar that would permit the mighty of our day to hold court, to seek utopian advice, or to cleanse themselves from the compromises of everyday life by listening to expositions of preposterous utopias? True, there has been the already legendary Kennedy era; and to this day an overworked Willy Brandt listens with close attention when writers tot up his past errors or darkly prophesy future defeats. Both examples are meager; at the very most they prove that there are no courts and hence no advisers to princes, or court jesters. But let's assume for the fun of it that there is such a thing as a literary court jester, who would like to be an adviser at court or in some foreign ministry; and let's assume at the same time that there is no such thing, that the literary court jester is only the invention of a serious and slow-working writer who, merely because he has given his mayor a few bits of advice that were not taken, fears in social gatherings to be mistaken for a court jester. If then we assume both that he exists and that he does not, then he exists as a fiction, hence in reality. But the question is: Is the literary court jester worth talking about?

When I consider the fools of Shakespeare and Velázquez, or let us say the dwarfish power components of the baroque age—for there is a connection between fools and power, although seldom

✪ GÜNTER GRASS gave this talk on the occasion of the meeting of the German writers' Group 47 at Princeton University in April, 1966. His books include *The Tin Drum* and *Dog Years*.

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between writers and power—I wish the literary court jester existed; and as we shall see, I know a number of writers who are well fitted for this political service. Except that they are far too touchy. Just as a "housekeeper" dislikes to be called a "cleaning woman," they object to being called fools. "Fool" is not enough. They just want to be known to the Bureau of Internal Revenue as "writers"; nor do they wish to be ennobled by the title of "poet." This self-chosen middle—or middle-class—position enables them to turn up their noses at the disreputable, asocial element, the fools and poets. Whenever society demands fools and poets—and society knows what it needs and likes—whenever, in Germany, for example, a writer of verse or a storyteller is addressed by an old lady or a young man as a "poet," the writer of verse or storyteller —including the present speaker—hastens to make it clear that he wishes to be known as a writer. This modesty, this humility, is underlined by short, embarrassed sentences: "I practice my trade like any shoemaker," or "I work seven hours a day with language, just as other self-respecting citizens lay bricks for seven hours a day." Or differing only in tone of voice and Eastern or Western ideology: "I take my place in socialist society" or "I stand four-square behind the pluralistic society and pay my taxes as a citizen among citizens."

Probably this well-bred attitude, this gesture of self-belittlement, is in part a reaction to the genius cult of the nineteenth century, which in Germany continued to produce its pungent-smelling houseplants down to the period of expressionism. Who wants to be a Stefan George running around with fiery-eyed disciples? Who wants to disregard his doctor's advice and live the concentrated life of a Rimbaud, without life insurance? Who does not shy away from the prospect of climbing the steps of Olympus every morning, who does not shun the gymnastics to which Gerhart Hauptmann still subjected himself or the tour de force that even Thomas Mann—if only by way of irony—performed as long as he lived?

Today we have adapted ourselves to modern life. You won't find a Rilke doing handstands in front of the mirror; Narcissus has discovered sociology. There is no genius, and to be a fool is

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inadmissible because a fool is genius in reverse. So there he sits, the domesticated writer, deathly afraid of Muses and laurel wreaths. His fears are legion. The already mentioned fear of being called a poet. The fear of being misunderstood. The fear of not being taken seriously. The fear of entertaining, that is, of giving enjoyment: the fear, invented in Germany but since then thriving in other countries, of producing something Lucullan. For although a writer is intent to the point of fear and trembling on being a part of society, he still wants very much to mold this society according to his fiction but chronically distrusts fiction as something smacking of the poet and fool; from the *"Nouveau Roman"* to "socialist realism," writers, sustained by choruses of lettered teenagers, are earnestly striving to offer more than mere fiction. The writer who does not wish to be a poet distrusts his own artifices. And clowns who disavow their circus are not very funny.

Is a horse whiter because we call it white? And is a writer who says he is "committed" a white horse? We are all familiar with the writer who, far removed from the poet and the fool, but not satisfied with the naked designation of his trade, appends an adjective calling himself and encouraging others to call him a "committed" writer, which always—forgive me—reminds me of titles such as "court pastry cook" or "Catholic bicycle rider." From the start, before even inserting his paper into the typewriter, the committed writer writes not novels, poems or comedies, but "committed literature." When a body of literature is thus plainly stamped, the obvious implication is that all other literature is "uncommitted." Everything else, which takes in a good deal, is disparaged as art for art's sake. Insincere applause from the Right calls forth insincere applause from the Left, and fear of applause from the wrong camp calls forth anemic hopes of applause from the right camp. Such complex and anguished working conditions engender manifestos, and the sweat of anguish is replaced by professions of faith. When, for instance, Peter Weiss, who after all did write *The Shadow of the Coachman's Body,* suddenly discovers that he is a "humanist writer," when a writer and poet versed in all the secrets of language fails to recognize that even in Stalin's day this adjective had already become an empty expletive, the farce of the committed

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humanist writer becomes truly theatrical. It would be better if he were the fool he is.

You will observe that I confine myself, in utter provincialism, to German affairs, to the smog in which I myself am at home. However, I trust that the United States of America has committed and humanist writers and poets as well as those others who are so readily defamed, and possibly also literary fools; because it is here in this country that this topic was proposed to me: Special adviser or court jester.

The "or" means no doubt that a court jester can never be a special adviser and that a special adviser must under no circumstances regard himself as a court jester, but rather perhaps as a committed writer. He is the great sage; to him financial reform is no Chinese puzzle; and it is he, hovering high above the strife of parties and factions, who in every instance pronounces the final word of counsel. After centuries of hostility the fictitious antitheses are reconciled. Mind and power walk hand in hand. Something like this: After many sleepless nights the Chancellor summons the writer Heinrich Böll to his bungalow. At first the committed writer listens in silence to the Chancellor's troubles. Then, when the Chancellor sinks back into his chair, the writer delivers himself of succinct, irresistible counsel. Relieved of his cares, the Chancellor springs from his chair eager to embrace the committed writer; but the writer takes an attitude of aloofness, he does not wish to become a court jester. He admonishes the Chancellor to convert writer's word into Chancellor's deed. The next day an amazed world learns that Chancellor Erhard has resolved to demobilize the army, to recognize the German Democratic Republic and the Oder-Neisse line, and to expropriate all capitalists.

Encouraged by this feat, the humanist author Peter Weiss journeys from Sweden to the recently recognized German Democratic Republic and leaves his card at the office of Walter Ulbricht, Chairman of the Council of State. Like Erhard at a loss for good advice, Ulbricht receives the humanist writer at once. Advice is given, embrace rejected, word converted into deed; and next day an amazed world learns that the Chairman of the Council of State has countermanded the order to fire on those attempting to cross

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the borders of his state in either direction and transformed the political sections of all prisons and penitentiaries into people's kindergartens. Thus counseled, the Chairman of the Council of State apologizes to Wolf Biermann, the poet and ballad singer, and asks him to sing away his—Ulbricht's—Stalinist past with bright and mordant rhymes.

Of course, court jesters, should there be any, cannot hope to compete with such accomplishments. Have I exaggerated? Of course I have exaggerated. But when I think of the wishes, often stated in an undertone, of committed and humanist writers, I don't think I have exaggerated so very much. And in my weaker moments I find it easy to see myself acting in just such a well-intentioned, or rather, committed and humanist manner: After losing the parliamentary elections the opposition candidate for the Chancellorship sends, in his perplexity, for the writer here addressing you, who listens, gives advice, and does not allow himself to be embraced; and the next day an amazed world learns that the Social Democrats have discarded the Godesberg Program and replaced it with a sharp, sparkling and once again revolutionary manifesto encouraging the workers to discard hats for caps. No, no revolution breaks out, because for all its sharpness this manifesto is so much to the point that neither capital nor Church can resist its arguments. Without a blow the government is handed over to the Social Democrats, *et cetera.* The United States of America, I should think, offers similar possibilities. Why, for example, shouldn't the President call on Allen Ginsberg, say, for advice?

These short-winded utopias remain—utopias. Reality speaks a different language. We have no special advisers or court jesters. All I see—and here I am including myself—is bewildered writers and poets who doubt the value of their own trade and avail themselves fully, partially or not at all of their infinitesimal possibilities of playing a part in the events of our time—not with advice but with action. It is meaningless to generalize about "the writer" and his position in society; writers are highly diversified individuals, shaken in varying degree by ambition, neuroses and marital crises. Court jester or special adviser—both are disembodied little men—five, six lines and a circle—such as the members of a discussion

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panel draw in their notebooks when they get bored. Nevertheless, they have given rise to a cult that, especially in Germany, is assuming an almost religious character. Students, young trade-unionists, young Protestants, high school boys and Boy Scouts, dueling and nondueling fraternities—all these and more never weary of organizing discussions revolving around questions like: "Ought a writer to be committed?" or "Is the writer the conscience of the nation?" Even men with critical minds and a genuine love of literature persist in calling upon writers to deliver protests, declarations and professions of faith. I don't mean that anyone asks them to take a partisan attitude toward political parties, to come out for or against the Social Democrats, for example; no, the idea is that speaking as writers, as a kind of shamefaced elite, they should protest, condemn war, praise peace and display noble sentiments. Yet anyone who knows anything about writers is well aware that even if they band together at congresses they remain eccentric individuals. True, I know a good many who cling with touching devotion to their revolutionary heirlooms, who make use of Communism, that burgundy-colored plush sofa with its well-worn springs, for afternoon reveries. But even these conservative "progressives" are split into one-man factions, each of which reads Marx in his own way. Others in turn are briefly mobilized by their daily glance at the paper and wax indignant at the breakfast table: "Something ought to be done, something ought to be done!" When helplessness lacks wit, it begins to snivel. And yet there is a great deal to do, more than can be expressed in manifestos and protests. But there are also a great many writers, known and unknown, who, far from presuming to be the "conscience of the nation," occasionally bolt from their desks and busy themselves with the trivia of democracy. Which implies a readiness to compromise. Something we must get through our heads is this: a poem knows no compromise, but men live by compromise. The individual who can stand up under this contradiction and act is a fool and will change the world.

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Pages from a Chilmark Diary . . . . .

WALTER TELLER

April Monday morning. A broad band of red light lies along the horizon. Overhead, the sky is mantled in gray. Sailor, take warning.

Rain mixes with snow as wheeling through Falmouth, I hurry along the west flank of Cape Cod. I am bound for Woods Hole in the southwest corner of the Cape, and the ferry to Martha's Vineyard. As the ferry runs, the island of Martha's Vineyard stands eight miles south of this coast.

In Woods Hole snow, and a wind hauling east. A dozen cars, and scarcely more than a dozen souls, board the *Islander,* 2000 tons gross and almost 200 feet long. She is licensed to carry, May to October, in daylight hours within 10 miles of shore, 788 persons. October to May, 242, the number of places available in her lifeboats.

The ferrying *Islander* makes it again through the tidal passage, the narrow waterway called the hole. Off to port, Nobska Point Lighthouse is sending her beam, flying her small craft warning pennant, and sounding her horn—neat little Nobska doing her work. Through a pelting spring storm, crew and passengers diesel across the Sound. Roofs of unheated summer houses crowding East Chop loom white with snow.

A disembarking in Vineyard Haven. More snow on the island than on the main —and this is unusual—clinging wet snow that scarcely seems cold, but the fair-weather house I am bound for I knew would be cold indeed. A stop at the hardware store to buy an electric heater. Sold out. Across the street the Cape & Vineyard Electric Company brings forth the last one in stock. Now a stop for groceries.

Wheels slavering through slush I head up-island. Behold a spring landscape plastered with watery flakes. Reds of spring smothered in coarse-meshed snow have turned into ice cream colors, red tips of birches like cranberry sherbet; greens of the pines, frosted lime.

Mushing through Tisbury, West Tisbury —then the road sign, Entering Chilmark, the town where I have spent many summers, and where I have a house. Although the house was not designed for all seasons, the passing years, and the changes years bring, have made it, for me, the place where the heart feels home.

And so I arrive on a scene that however familiar must never be taken for granted. From a hillside I gaze at an inner pond, Quitsa, and an outer, Menemsha, arms of the sea joined by a miniature strait, and all of it held in a network of moors and encircling hills. One sees at the same time, but farther off in the north, Vineyard Sound, and some links in the chain of Elizabeth Islands. Turning to eastward, through a slot in the hills, one glimpses the flat gray ocean. A wide ranging yet not too distant view. Not at all a view to get lost in . . .

I am writing now at the kitchen table, sitting with my back to the fireplace, feeling the heat from the oak logs stacked to the tops of the andirons. Have had fire going five hours. At the other end of the room the electric heater turns out to be a boy trying to do a man's job. Never mind that

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✪ WALTER TELLER's series of personal essays, THE WAY IT IS, has appeared in recent issues of the SCHOLAR. The present article is from his forthcoming book, *Cape Cod and the Offshore Islands.*

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end of the room. By the fireplace I soak up the open hearth warmth. You don't know how good a fire can feel until you need it—and make a big one.

Nine o'clock. Snow and rain slack off. I have eaten well—Scotch whiskey, hamburger, raw onion, boiled potatoes. The wind hauls northwest, the sky is clearing. And it is cold, 35 degrees. This beautiful bed of coals and logs—may it last through the night.

At 5:15 a fair day looks in. The mercury clings to 35. Barometer 30.2 and rising. I pour logs onto the fire. Snowy white moors of yesterday are today a not quite winter brown. The green tinge, although faint, is there. In clearings among the moor's tangle of vines and tough plant materials, swatches of meadow-grass green appear. Down by the pond shore, domestic greens start into view on a formal summer house lawn.

Some houses humanize the scene, others disturb it. Among the latter, some disturb more than others. There is, you might say, a disturbance scale. At one end are houses whose owners have scraped away the indigenous growth, laid on topsoil, cultivated grass, manicured, suburbanized, and then crowned the whole effect with trucked-in, somehow emasculated, boulders. At the other end, are the houses that work with what is there, and blend in.

He is back—the marsh hawk—migratory like myself, and seasonal resident of how many years. He—because lighter-colored than she. Good to see him at once and have that settled and not be left wondering where he has got to.

Noon. Fifty-eight degrees, the day setting a standard by which to measure perfection. When the marsh hawk quarters you see his shadow. Buoyant, unhurried, he skirts the edge of the shore, glides on the wind and then disappears, perhaps to perch on secluded ground between this house and the pond. It is hard to believe in yesterday's wintry landscape—now that all traces of snow have vanished. The heavens are for us.

Squibnocket Beach. The Atlantic Ocean. Water yellow and turquoise, surf gentle and very inviting, and the beach, end to end, clean as on the Third Day. Herring gulls, scavengers of the longshore, stand at their separate stations. One rock, one gull—plenty of elbow room—and all facing into the wind like boats at their moorings. The better to hear? Smell? Hardly. The olfactory organ is poorly developed, and the question remains whether a bird possesses much power of smell, or indeed, any. Or are the gulls facing into the wind the better to keep their feathers unruffled?

A good day for sketching, good for walking the beach. You see prints in the sand where a herring gull walked, and also a periwinkle. Periwinkles and red tips of sea grass poke through the wet.

April shows landscape alive without leaves. Driving farther up-island, along the state road to the westernmost and Indian town, Gay Head, you see stone walls and swales invisible during the season, and in the woodlands, scattered little old houses which in summer you did not know were there.

Skunk cabbage marks the roadside wet places with flashes of jolly young green. The leaves are four inches high. It is said that bears enjoyed the juice and flesh of these early perennial herbs. And they do look good enough to eat—or would by another name.

Five o'clock light. Cooling air. Looking over the moors—and if one is in a glass-paneled house as I am—one cannot help looking—you see a great change has occurred since morning. Patches of untamed shrubbery that not many hours ago were fuscous and brown are turning to silver and lavender.

Pale crimson western horizon. Then night rises blue and glittery. Good omens. I am ready to say tomorrow will be a fair day. I should, but do not—because of listening to the radio, and hearing a different forecast. So there go courage, faith and weather conviction.

On awakening, frost! By noon, however, the temperature reaches 50. The day is fair. An unclouded sky, truly azure—and an

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azure-reflecting ocean. Deep water of tidal ponds—azure. On the shoals, color shades from glaucous to light greenish gray.

Bill King appears in his pickup truck with a welcome cargo, fireplace wood sawed to thirty-inch lengths, most of it split but some ten-inch backlogs included as well, and every stick of it oak—as good-looking fireplace wood as man wants to see. Stacked on the porch it makes a beautiful sculpture—expendable, which is part of its beauty—and while it lasts it reassures—and so, April, prima donna of months. . . . Spring in New England can be a wild season.

Bill King of North Tisbury, native son, studies the fireplace masonry built of drilled and split granite. He asks who laid the stone up. I answer, George Cook, Gay Head Indian, builder of boats, master of many trades and, perhaps, jack of none. Bill King asks further, Where did he get the stone? I have never been sure. From the ruins of his grandfather's house. From foundations and doorsteps of burned out or tumbledown dwellings. Some old curbstones salvaged from dumps. Some may have been stolen. Bill King shakes his head. Not stolen, he says. Not stolen, he repeats. Let us say, requisitioned.

To those who knew him, George Cook, not many years dead, is already a legendary figure. Someone may someday write his story. A story of a style of life that has gone. Skills and crafts no longer learned. An unschooled artist's love of native materials. An innate simplicity and understanding of the economy of means. And zest for enjoying the pleasures of life.

During the night I replenished the fire twice. At 6:30 the temperature outside reads 38, inside only 10 degrees higher. A translucent gray light overhead, smooth and cold.

This rectangular house of recent design, its four corners pointing to the four directions, confronts the northeast. Today it has the wind in its face, a glassy modular face, and the wind blowing hard and gusty. To eastward I see the white horses.

Bill King's hot-burning oak logs pull me through. I haul the kitchen table closer, and sit backside to the blaze. Pure pleasure to feel at one's back the heat from the hearth. Internal warmth, however, will be wanted by evening. West Tisbury, Chilmark and Gay Head, the up-island towns, are dry. Which means a trip down-island.

This seems as good a place as any to say a word about the shape and size of Martha's Vineyard. An irregular triangle, deeply indented, notched and eroded, some appendages and wavering lines—20 miles long, 9½ miles across at its widest. It comprises six towns—the aforementioned up-island three, and three down-island; Tisbury (which includes Vineyard Haven), Oak Bluffs and Edgartown.

I drive the 15 miles down-island to Edgartown. At this time of year one meets very few cars on the road. Vineyard roadsides gladden the eye. Fencerows sympathetically trimmed. Hedgerows lovingly contoured and molded. A total absence of billboards. To drive down-island is not a chore. The drive itself is pleasing.

Edgartown, county seat of the County of Dukes County (to call the latter by its full legal name), is one of the two Vineyard towns that are wet. I go there to make a purchase. You're like the robins, says the seasonal licensee putting out a big hand as he welcomes me in. You give us something to look forward to. Namely, the returning wave of summer when the population of Martha's Vineyard rises from an estimated 6,500 persons year-round to a crest of 40,000 or more.

Home again in Chilmark, I find the barometer falling. The wind continues to rise. Some might call the day bleak. I, however, do not, weather like most matters being somewhat subjective, the exterior atmosphere usually modified by the climate within. Today seems to me exhilarating. The light remains even, lines and edges of landscape clear and sharp.

Forty degrees at five this evening. I am holding off the low temperature with oak logs, hot tea and whiskey. (Have given up on the electric heater.) And I am making plans for a tighter and snugger house come another off-season.

They say this has been an exceptional

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April. I have never known one that was not. No perceptible change in the foliage today. Spring did not move. It stood still.

Felt nothing like it since the last hurricane—the house jumping all night, big expanses of plate glass bellying and straining like sails. Kept the fire up and slept beside it.

Thirty-seven degrees at 6:30 this morning, gale force winds, gusting to 60 and more miles an hour says a local radio station. Winds north northeast. Slashing rain mixed with snow. High seas and pounding surf. I can hear it. The seven o'clock sailing of the ferry, Vineyard Haven to Woods Hole, is canceled. I was intending to leave today. Will I be able to?

The nine o'clock sailing is canceled, and then the eleven. The ferry, one of the charms of an island, can also be one of its problems. Winds, comes a report, are holding at 50. Winds and seas, rather than fogs and rains, are the elements that halt the service.

I head for the general store and post office, and informal meeting place in West Tisbury, Albion Alley & Company, Dealers in Almost Everything. Established in 1858 as the S. M. Mayhew Company, it is said to be the oldest continued store on the Vineyard, and one of the oldest general merchandise operations in Massachusetts. Albion Alley, born in the down-island town of Oak Bluffs, went to work up-island, in West Tisbury, at age eighteen. That was in 1920. Twenty-six years later, in 1946, he bought his employers out. He then went on to triple the business. But he also kept the original storefront and building, the original floor and the counter. Half the people who come in during the summer, he says, come to see what an old store looks like.

In 1920, when he began keeping store, he sold, in addition to meats and groceries, harness and grain and farming tools, rubber boots, foul weather gear and all manner of yard goods and notions. These lines have been replaced with a wide range of hardware, electrical fittings and fixtures, gardening equipment, furniture, even imported baskets. Dealers in Almost Everything today means a gamut of goods from kerosene lamps to hot coffee dispensed by a vending machine.

In 1964, Albion Alley turned over the business to three of his children in partnership. Since then, Jimmy, Phyllis and John have added a laundromat, a U-Do-It car wash, and a real estate agency. Also, Jimmy succeeded his father to the postmastership of West Tisbury. The oldest son, Albion, Jr., is proprietor of one of the Vineyard's first garage and gasoline stations. "All our enterprises," says the father with quiet pride, "are on this street."

Customers come from all the towns on the island. Albion Alley remembers when they came from Gay Head in oxcarts. Unlike the supermarkets and chain stores, the Alley family's store extends credit. Sometimes it carries Vineyarders six to eight months, more or less through the long offseason. Not everyone speaks well of summer people but Albion Alley does. "I never lost a penny from a summer account," he says.

Albion Alley, graying, bright-eyed and cheerful, has the air of a man who has done his job well and also not gone unrewarded. While the younger generation of partners are minding the store, the Dealer in Almost Everything has time to retail the news, and talk. During the night, he says, gusts of wind were clocked at 82 miles an hour, that is, winds of hurricane force. The biggest blow of the winter, he says, and in fact the biggest since 1954.

West Tisbury village, centerpiece of the island, away from sight and sound of the ocean, was a favorite place of retirement with Vineyard whaling captains. Here you find the wind in the tops of the trees, which is different from its whipping over the water. As befits a one-time agricultural center, the setting is open, rather level and pastoral. If sheep were still being raised in West Tisbury, this late April storm might have been the lambkiller.

On Music Street, beside a dwelling of maybe one hundred and fifty years, old orchard grass puts on young green. A great woody lilac, antique-looking as the house it is standing beside, produces a new crop

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of buds. A robin hopping along the ground makes a pass with its beak, hauls forth a worm, swallows it down. Classic and cliché. It happens every spring.

The rain slacks off but just the same the two o'clock sailing is canceled. Winds continue to blow. Seas sweep over the breakwater outside Vineyard Haven harbor. A topsail schooner, pride of the seafaring nostalgic rich, drags her anchor and goes aground, stern first onto the beach. One may as well take her for a reminder that time has been when the coasting trade was handled almost entirely by schooners. Fleets of them once rode through Vineyard Sound. With a shift in the wind, Vineyard Haven harbor would fill with vessels finding the wind against them. And there they would wait for a favoring change.

At Squibnocket Beach, wind whips a long spray from the tops of the combers. Tides are not only high but raving. The clear beach of two days ago disappears under boiling gray-brown waters.

At Menemsha, waves storm over the riprap. Sand blowing off the Menemsha Creek dunes blasts at the human intruder and car.

The four o'clock sailing is canceled, the seven as well. Which completes the schedule. Feelings of an island cut off. Then clouds break away, the sky opens. A sunset arrives, brief and delicate. Gale warnings still flying. The storm, however, is blowing out.

The wind hauls east and continues at 40 knots, but when morning comes the ferry sails for Woods Hole. Crossing Vineyard Sound, bound in, I catch up on the papers. "Raging Sea Sinks Ship, 6 Die," headlines a Boston sheet. "No real hope was held out for the six men, including the captain and the owner, who comprised the crew of the 94-foot *Deep Water,* which left New Bedford Friday. . . . The *Deep Water* disappeared 100 miles south of Martha's Vineyard. . . ."

Two days later, newspapers reported two trawlers, captained by father and son, believed missing in an Atlantic storm, had turned up safe. "The father's ship, the 91-foot *Elizabeth N,* drew into New Bedford. . . . Sixty-year-old Captain John A. Edwards and his crew of five were safe. But the 94-foot *Deep Water,* captained by his son, George, 34, was still listed as missing. . . .

"Then a Coast Guard search plane spotted the *Deep Water* . . . all six aboard were in good condition.

" 'Oh my God, it's too good to be true,' said Mrs. Lorraine Edwards, wife of the younger captain, when she learned her husband was safe. She was about to call his parents when she saw them drive up to the house.

" 'We got out of the car,' said the elder Mr. Edwards later, 'and the daughter ran out to us screaming, "He's safe. He's safe." My wife fainted in my arms, knocking me down, and we both went sprawling in the grass.' "

So ends the storm of the year, and also April.

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REAPPRAISALS

Celebration: The Lyric Poetry of Melville Cane

JEFFREY ROBINSON

Melville Cane flies from his home in Manhattan to Denver on the average of twice a year to visit his daughter and her family. He takes up residence in the basement bedroom of their home—officially his private quarters in the West for about the last sixteen years. At some point during this period we (I am a member of this family and Melville Cane's grandson) christened this room "the dungeon," although it hardly claims kinship to something dark, dank and confining. He comes to Denver for physical relaxation and the enjoyment of his family's company. He evidently finds our home suitable for creation, since it is responsible for a number of his efforts, particularly in recent years.

Although the climate and the company in Denver appeal to him, he nevertheless spends a considerable portion of each visit in "the dungeon." I have often wondered what transpires at these lower depths. Obviously some poetry gets set down on paper, since final products, or at least first versions coherent enough to warrant response from others, from time to time rise with him to the first floor. But, I've wondered, what else does he do or think down there? Above ground he exudes an almost exclusively positive spirit. Humor and a sharp and active perceptivity play constantly on whatever comes within his ken. Or, if alone, he may be found reading quietly in the living room, "in the wing-chair shelter." I am somehow convinced that it is below where the struggles occur, where, perhaps, he weeps over what has passed or what has not been, where he relives the battles of his personal past as well as fights the verbal battles of the nascent poem. Either the anguish evaporates on his way upstairs, or else he abandons inner struggles in order that he may wrestle happily with the upper world.

I have offered this account of his daily life in Denver as a metaphor to what I believe to be both the themes of many of his poems and of his conception of the creative process: the tensions, whether they be destructive urges or flashes of insight, tremble beneath the surface. The world at large sees only resolution and harmony. His poetry, basically dramatic, often follows a familiar pattern: conflict proceeding miraculously to concord, doubt to certainty, confusion into order, imperfection to perfection.

Bees After Rain

Dormant, their house sodden with rain,
Stunned by sudden sun,
The bees stir, revive,
Charge wildly out of the hive,
Race
Furiously,
Then gloriously
Interlace
A golden skein.

Nobody knows quite how it happened, but it did, which is the important thing—ob-

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viously a miracle. This poem moves *to* a state of harmony and perfection. Sometimes he stands amidst tranquillity and senses uncontrolled energy beneath serenity.

Somewhere Hid in the Wild

Now in the mid-day glare
The heavy valley drowses;
Only the lazy stir
Of chimney smoke from houses.

Across the listless fields
A single cow-bell drones;
Step for step it yields
Its crumpled monotones.

Somewhere hid in the wild
An ever-unsatisfied bleat,
Like a feverish tenement child
Above an August street.

This is no settled or studied expression of the theme. The last stanza permanently violates any impression of universal and all-pervading serenity. The "ever-unsatisfied bleat" forces us to visualize an animal nature that defies self-control and mastery. The innocence of a lamb bleating, on the other hand, suggests a pathetic helplessness, a lamb lost and unhappy. The simile brings more anguish into the emotion. The comparison of the lamb to a child is obvious, but innocence has been violently transposed from a rural to an intensely urban setting. No longer can we regard the dissatisfaction from a distance, since any romantic notions of the country wither beneath the dry brutality of the slums in summer.

If, then, Melville Cane's poetry tends to dwell in the realm of resolution and harmony, it clearly has not come about as the result of a superficial regard for the disorder, the pathos, and even the tragedy in life. It is the intense and painful awareness of these undercurrents that has forced him both to seek a vision of something more perfect and less destructive and to recognize (in poems such as "Bees After Rain") that disorder often leads to harmony.

"Bees After Rain," indeed, could not have been written by him forty or more years ago. At this time his battles with the unconscious were so ferocious that they obliterated any vision of, and strangled his hopes for, order, contentment, and the victorious release of the creative powers. "January Garden," the title poem of his first book published in 1926, depicts this defeat.

January Garden

Insidious, elemental cold
Foglike steals
Over garden-mold
And seals
The flower-border like a grave.

Lower, deeper,
Inch on inch,
It spreads its iron hold.

Pores through which the rain and
sunlight flowed
Now, instead,
Are stopped with icy lead.

Take a sharp pick,
Break the harsh thick
Wintry metal:
Once you might have found
Springing through the ground
What goes to shape a petal.

Once from here did issue
Palpitating tissue
Of larkspur,
And the earthy mesh
Warmed the velvet flesh
Of pansies.

Once from here did stream
Fragrance, like a dream,—
Wreathing to enclose
The rose.

Beauty's womb
Is now a tomb
For frozen worms.

Here his creative impulses truly are imprisoned in a dungeon, frozen unto death. The poet looks back wistfully and reverently to a time when he could experience peacefully yet actively the beauties of nature. In this poem he recalls such experience as a vague, youthful vision, suggesting Swinburne, Morris and the early Yeats:

Once from here did stream
Fragrance, like a dream,—
Wreathing to enclose
The rose.

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If he was to survive the anguish of that moment and revive, he could no longer write or live in a world of Victorian repression, but must see things with utmost clarity, yet not rigidly. The miracle is that the poetry only hovers on bitterness momentarily before it eases gracefully into a charitable but still accurate view of nature's as well as his own drama.

Rain is sometimes associated in his poetry with the destructive elements in the unconscious. Water can freeze life. Rain comes in violent storms. But as Cane frees himself from these fears, rain begins to have more positive connotations. In "Beginning to Rain" the poet tentatively, questioningly, rationalizes the evil of rain. The precarious calm in the poem hints that a truce with the elements is on the way.

Beginning to Rain

It seemed the first sharp spatter of rain
But only sound dripped from the branches.
Yet I'm not sure—
It may have been a warning of undropped drops,
Sent ahead
To get the leaves used to it.

The truce comes in a poem called "Fine Rain," which begins with the frigidity of the earlier "January Garden," moves ahead in a lovely crystalline style, and then quietly and triumphantly brings all of nature into a design. If the poet were a flowery Romantic or a misty Victorian, we would be tempted to associate the verb "weave" with a tapestry-like effect, connoting the organic and intricate union of the various parts of the universe.

Fine Rain

Fine rain
Drills with steel
Through ice;

Strings silver berries
On black branches;

Weaves sky
With sod.

In a much more recent poem, "Summer Thunder," the imminent storm is anticipated eagerly, as something that releases the imagination in all its sharp brilliance rather than that which constricts and maims. Breathe easy.

Summer Thunder

Broken into chunks
Of sound, like trunks
drunkenly
careering
headlong
down
a stairway.
Clearing
The electric airway.

Once the mind has, if only uneasily, been freed from torment, the process of seeing clearly and imaginatively can begin. But neither does the way to clarity come without struggle. There is much that obscures the object. Melville Cane's image for obscurity is simply fog. Nature provides one obstacle after another. And yet the poet's encounters with fog demonstrate that he has gained considerable confidence in his inner self. Clarity of vision is unveiled by a sleight of hand approaching the religious as Fog, the Magician, first dissolves the old world, "sponges every color out of flowers," and then lifts, in a new way, allowing for the emergence of inner light and clarity:

Noiselessly, peacefully,
The old world ends.
Nothing remains
But fog and me
And another world to be.
Slowly, dimly,
I seem to feel
A little of the wonder and the joy
That must have gladdened God in the beginning,
Creation before him.

If rain and fog betray varying degrees of uncertainty and inhibition, the third gift from heaven, snow, provides an image that, for him, has no conflicting connotations. Snow blankets the outer world completely, assuring a peace from which "everything grows clear." The poem "White Fog" incorporates all three images: rain, turning into snow, but called "white fog." The

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benign quality of "fog" appears in the comparison to doves.

White Fog

Gently
On myriad soundless wings
White fogs glide,
Alight,
A flock of doves
With breasts of down.

The sky was black
With rain
But now is white
With feathers.

Let the feathers fall,
Heap the feathers high;
Bury deep the black world
Underneath the white.

Nothing can be seen;
Everything grows clear.

The simplicity and silence that surround the final two lines of this poem understate the enormity of the poet's triumph. Again in a quiet way, he happily betrays an excitement in the anticipation of snowfall and the blessed state it provides—even the title of this next poem, "Presence of Snow," tells us that at least in the poet's mind the snow is already here. Yet he does not bother to paint for us the scene an hour from now, but rather luxuriates in the breathless moment before the snow is released. The snow may provide the ideal setting for a release of creative impulse, but in this poem it appears to be also an image of the impulse itself, and the poet's attention is correspondingly focused on the moment before the release of the impulse.

Presence of Snow

So rare, so mere,
You cannot hear
It brush against the stillness or impair
With faintest stir
The poised, suspended air.

So rare, so mere,
And yet imponderably clear;
You cannot see, yet see
The secret flow
Of immanent snow,
Although
The softest breath has yet to free,
The gentlest current yet to take
The first bewildered flake.

The companion piece to the above poem, "Snow Toward Evening," takes us one step further in the process of snow falling, of process resolving itself. In this poem, as in the previous one, we are impressed by the hushed reverence evinced for the phenomenon about to occur. The silence before snowfall reminds one of the conditions in an orchestra hall at the moment when the conductor first appears from a door at the rear of the stage, moves through the attendant musicians, assumes prominence at the front, and magically releases the initial harmony. The chaotic buzz of the audience's conversation and the instrumentalists' tuning up yields to a sudden strained yet solemn silence, which in turn yields to the released harmony of sound and the settling back into comfortable seats. The snow, alive, silent, harmonious in its silence, falls to the ground with the fall of night—the wavering seventh resolving to the tonic chord.

Snow Toward Evening

Suddenly the sky turned gray,
The day,
Which had been bitter and chill,
Grew soft and still.
Quietly
From some invisible blossoming tree
Millions of petals, cool and white,
Drifted and blew,
Lifted and flew,
Fell with the falling night.

The snow falling does not bury or oppose life, as in Frost's "Desert Places" or "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," but rather exemplifies the life process—the inorganic becomes organic. The snowflakes are petals from an "invisible blossoming tree."

In the poem "Behind Dark Spaces" day similarly emerges, blossoms from night: "Out of shreds, out of seeds, of utter gray,/ Ultimate, brightly-woven, high-flowering day." The process of growth and creation occurs in the stem of the flower, the trunk

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of the tree—it is invisible to the eye, and the resultant thing of beauty is a miracle of religious proportion.

Melville Cane is, I believe, a "nature" poet in the most profound sense. Deeply and constantly aware of, sometimes even harried by, the process of creation, often attempting to account for and visualize this process, he nevertheless manages to keep an unswerving eye on the inexplicable wonders that are the results of nature's efforts. His poetry exhibits a leap of faith from nature's subterranean chemical activity to her visible product of perfection. I am reminded of a similar quality inherent in some of the poetry of Herbert and Vaughan. The simple glory of God overwhelms the conflicts of the mind in, for example, Herbert's "The Collar":

> But as I raved and grew more fierce and wild
> at every word,
> Methought I heard one calling, Child!
> And I replied, My Lord.

Or in "Love" the weary traveler, "guilty of dust and sin," argues his unworthiness to Christ, who, step by step, "reasons" with him and wins him over with the logic of faith, the logic of His own glory. One finds the same "reasoning" in Vaughan's "The World," while in the following lines from "The Night" he describes God's glory as invisible, inexplicable, yet dazzling in its effect:

> There is in God, some say,
> A deep but dazzling darkness, as men here
> Say it is late and dusky, because they
> See not all clear; . . .

Is this significantly different from "Somewhere, behind dark spaces,/Light races"? The word "somewhere" assures us that the statement, presented as fact, is based on faith rather than actual observation.

We can test the consistency of Melville Cane's vision by examining poems in which human beings and human relationships are the subjects. Immediately it is apparent that, just as he is awed by the magic of nature's creation, he is stunned by the magic of love. In "All I Knew" the sudden blossoming of love works like the blossoming of April's earliest bud.

All I Knew

> There was no reason, no warning;
> All I knew—you were there!
> As infallibly there
> As the crystal air
> That April morning.
>
> There was no hint or suggestion
> Of person or past;
> I moved alone, serene in a vast
> Non-human scheme, in a harmony cast
> Too right for question.
>
> I was one with the rising season
> With April's every leaf and earliest bud;
> April's crystal flood
> Sent a new fire streaming in the blood.
> No warning, no reason!

The lover is amazed not so much at the quality of the love itself (it is simply "a new fire") as at the inexplicable fact that it has burst upon him—no warning, no reason! At first glance the dynamics of this poem appear to be reversed from those that we have discovered in other poems. We have been used to something that corresponds approximately and variously to a conflict-leading-to-resolution pattern, but here as he looks back, he had moved alone harmoniously only to see his peace disrupted triumphantly by love. But perhaps he has achieved a premature oneness with things, as he carefully betrays in the phrase, "a harmony cast/Too right for question." This harmony has its imperfections hidden; it is born of artifice—cast in a rigid mold, a mold or scheme that excludes humanity and that achieves serenity by ignoring the forces of life. The love that bursts upon him cracks the rigid mold unexpectedly to send "a new fire streaming in the blood." And yet, although he at first appears to be destroying his harmony, he is still "one with the rising season." The crystalline quality of his former harmony is simply his soul in winter—dormant, protected from destructive human affairs. The spring rites of love melt his mold, infusing vitality into his system, which therefore remains in nature's harmonious pattern. I can only think of the opening lines of Chaucer's *General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* as a portrayal of the infusion of

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energy and life into nature and men as spring returns. Both those lines and these see the return of life as miraculous yet as natural in the conventional order of the seasons. Melville Cane, unlike his predecessors, openly exclaims his delight and amazement in the occurrence.

We can find other poems that bring to love and feminine beauty the mystery of creation, such as "She Is a Silvery Waterfall," which in the comparison tells the reader that "long ago, a faltering stream/ Dwindled,/ Miles from the source," uncertain of its fate—expiration or explosion, but by unknown means is now a silvery waterfall. It reminds one of Coleridge's "Kubla Khan." In "Difference in Time," a rather heavy sonnet, he praises his love as one who divines "what lies behind the dark." "Clairvoyantly you pierce the fog, and bright/ Planets emerge. You are yourself the light." But the poem that analyzes the mystery of love in greatest detail is "Each to Each." Yet even here one must accept, as he says in "A Man from Porlock," "a realm where magic rules and outlaws reason," when it comes to pinpointing the instant when the barrier between two lovers drops away ("evaporate" in his poetry is an extremely active verb). During the first half of the poem he describes the agony of seeking to achieve that which one consciously cannot strive for but which one wants desperately. When the barrier is broken, he looks back triumphantly over the conquered, selfish emotions that held them apart:

Each to Each

We were closed, each to each, yet dear.
We were taut with a covert pride;
We were tied
With a throttling fear;
We were undefined
And blind.

We were caught when we sought to reach;
We were mute when we strove for speech.
We were closed, each to each, yet dear.
We were vapid, polite, obscure
Through a merciless flood of pain;
We were trivial through strain;
We were desperate to endure.

Then a locked word slipped from your heart,
Like warm rain dropped on mine,
And the fog that had held us apart
Thinned,—we could dimly divine
The one we had groped for in vain.

And my hand touched yours, and the pain
That had clutched and withered had fled,
And the fear and the pride lay dead,
And at last we were free, we were plain.

We were closed, each to each, yet dear.
We are close, we are clear.

Obviously the poet and his lover were defeating their purposes in fighting consciously to link themselves together. When they end victorious, it is, as it were, accidental—the locked word *slips out.*

Can a poet trying to bring his images to the surface exert any control over this process? Can he consciously organize his condition such that locked words will slip more easily from the heart onto the page? Melville Cane has always felt, again in the Romantic tradition, that one can increase the potential for receptivity by creating physical conditions which encourage relaxation, by, for example, allowing time for this world and these tensions to fade, as he says in his prose work *Making a Poem.*

Before a work of art, in this case a poem, can germinate, one must faithfully prepare the soil, one must gain detachment. And, since the unconscious is the reservoir of the material from which one draws in order to create, one must deliberately plan to induce and achieve inner peace and serenity before tapping this source and preparing to compose.

How to attain this detachment, therefore, is one's first task. The means vary according to the individual. In my own case I try to cut myself off from the telephone or the ringing of the doorbell. I close the door to my room; if the sunlight is distracting—it usually is—I pull down the shades. If it happens to be evening, I often sit for a while in the dark before touching a pencil.

I don't try to think and I don't try not to think. I do, however, try to make myself comfortable and free from bodily strains. After a while I become gradually relaxed. Relaxation in turn invites a state of passivity, the desired condition of receptivity. The deeper the passivity the closer one draws to the unconscious.

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He conceives of creation in terms of the flower. He prepares the soil, the conditions best suited for growth, and prepares it *faithfully,* assuming that that is all he can do before nature takes her own course. The poet hardly touches the miracle of creation itself. He says the same thing in his poem "So That It Flower":

> To heed the flash and speed the leap
> Out of the dark, designless deep,
> And shield the intrinsic, undefined,
> From the perversions of the mind,
> And warm the seed with sacred care,
> And nurse the seed with love and prayer
> So that it flower, pure and fair.

Here again are all the familiar images and attitudes: the light racing behind dark spaces, the warming and nursing of the seed, the rich attitude toward the unconscious as something almost frightening ("dark, designless deep") as well as the natural resource for products of creation, the sense that one in nursing the seed is performing a solemn religious rite, and finally the idea that with care the flower blossoms of its own accord.

I have always been aware of Melville Cane's apparent lack of concern with formal religion, particularly the Jewish tradition into which he was born. He rarely alludes to Jewish matters, and when he does, the reference is usually humorous and often cynical. And yet I am convinced of a religious instinct in the man at some level, if I could only find it. From this presentation of his poetry it should be clear that it is in this realm of creativity and creation, natural and aesthetic, that his pious spirit must reside most harmoniously. But recently it has become clear to me that his attitude toward creativity and the spirit has very basically a Jewish quality about it. I would not be surprised if the poet himself is unaware of this.

He has probably devoted the bulk of his waking hours in the last sixty years to the law, which, by the way, to my knowledge, he rarely refers to in his lyrics, while a smaller portion of his life has been accorded to the creative output. Occasionally I have heard him complain that too much of his energy has been expended in the work of this world, in the concerns of law, and that not enough has been channeled into art. Were he to do it all again, he would have stayed with the journalism, in which he began his career, in order that he might have organized his life more exclusively around the literary arts. For him what a Paradise this would have been! —seven days a week humbling himself before the creations of nature, translating these wonders into words. But, of course, were this wish to be granted we would be reading a body of poetry different from the one we presently have. I believe that the qualities that characterize his writings are in large part the result of what he may consider an awkward and unfortunate imbalance in his life between law and art. He cherishes the moments reserved for his poetic spirit more because they come less often. The longer he writes the more he feels it necessary to observe these moments in detail, to explore all facets of the creative process, the creative instant. He analyzes, but more often he worships, he celebrates this moment. The themes in his lyrics are often surprisingly consistent and the dynamics of nature as he describes them follow a predictable course. This fact may limit his poetic range, but for a worshiper it is a sign of unbending and ever-renewed faith. Perhaps, then, his poetic bent lends itself peculiarly to the tensions created between his two activities.

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." Melville Cane often seems to have this commandment at the forefront of his mind, particularly if one interprets "Sabbath" in the light of his own work. The Sabbath is the day of rest, but it is also a day of worship, a day to nourish and nurture the spirit. "Labour is a craft, but perfect rest is an art. It is a result of an accord of body, mind, and imagination. To attain a degree of excellence in art, one must accept its discipline, one must abjure slothfulness. The seventh day is a *palace in time* which we build. It is made of soul, joy, and reticence." The seventh day could not have been without the previous six, the day of rest assumes six days of work in its

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honor. The seventh day celebrates the creation. Could Melville Cane's continual celebration occur without his mundane activities of the previous six days? Does not he describe the preparation for creation in a manner in accord with Abraham Heschel's interpretation above of Sabbath ideals?

The poet believes that poetry must be song. As a result he looks askance at the poetry of Eliot and his followers. He writes of the "Cerebral Poet," who "plans so well, so tightly in advance/ The poem he means to do,/ No intuition stands the slightest chance/ Of wriggling through." In a poem called "Impeccable," after discussing wryly the flawless execution of verse controlled tightly by intellect, he concludes,

> One sought in vain the tasteless,
> Inept or crude or wrong,
> One could not find the slightest lack
> Of art, detect the faintest crack
> To extricate the song.

Heschel wrote: "Angels have six wings, one for each day of the week, with which they chant their song; but they remain silent on the Sabbath, for it is the Sabbath which then chants a hymn to God. It is the Sabbath that inspires all creatures to sing praise to the Lord." The singing of the Sabbath celebrates the mystery and wonder of creation. Song for Melville Cane, as he wrote in *And Pastures New*, "issues forth spontaneously, impulsively, passionately, defiant of rational interference or restraint. It arises out of a state of innocence and wonder; it flows with intuitive vigor and confidence to reveal and report the innermost truth, the mysterious essence . . . Poets must recapture spontaneity and music and magic and the capacity for unhampered flight; they must dedicate themselves to Dionysus, the untamed God."

As a poet, then, he celebrates his version of the Sabbath by nurturing tranquillity and then by offering his praise in song. But song does not only imply an outpouring of the soul. The words themselves, just like the state of mind that produced them, must be nurtured and caressed. He takes great care to choose exactly the right word for the moment, often exploring an idea from several angles, probing, to assure that all possible means of expression have been considered. Any careful reading of his poetry will bring to light his deep concern for craft, which he considers not only important as a man whose success depends on the utmost precision in placing words on paper, but also as one who has elevated the art of careful observation to the realm of the religious. "Minutiae" describes just this concern:

> The precise, split-second when the tide turns,
> The degree of pain between a twitch and a twinge,
> The hairline between the just-too-much and the not-quite-enough,
> The exact telegraphy and registry of intuitions,
> The refinement of the cloudy general into its luminous particulars;—
> Each fresh discovery of sleeping differences,
> Each shade and grade and tint,
> Each new and sharp nuance,
> Each hard-won nicety,
> Rejecting the merely-approximate,
> The short-of-accurate,
> The too-readily-acceptable,—
> All these,
> (Momentous minutiae!)
> So dear to man's concern.

Although part of the act of choosing the precise word involves the plodding use of the dictionary (see "Linda and the Dictionary" in his *Making A Poem*), much of it requires an athletic ability to leap in a flash to catch the word as it races elusive and unharnessed through the mind. Sometimes you win and catch it, while sometimes you lose—a serious business and yet one that he can regard playfully.

An Idea Escapes

> Soundless,
> A rare and golden butterfly
> Swam on air about my head,
> Wafted,
> Drifted,
> And settled on a petal.
>
> Breathless,
> All-set,
> I raised,
> I poised

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The subtile net
And cast—
And missed.

Once he said to me of poetry, "If it's small you have to play it small—it's a great game." Let us watch him play the game purely for fun. A poem called "Diffidence" begins "I never seek a combat/ With a wombat." It continues with an insistent rhythm unquestionably reminiscent of a Gilbert and Sullivan patter song—"A Policeman's Lot is Not a Happy One," for example. This is not surprising since Gilbert and Sullivan have always been favorites of his (in fact, he wrote a poem about them).

A foray
From a moray
I would shun.
The mildest kind of tussle
With a jellyfish or mussel
Is not my notion of fun.

I never pick a quarrel
With a squirrel,
A creature
Whose ill-nature
I suspect;
While a rough-and-tumble battle
With an up-and-coming rattler
I would utterly, emphatically reject
And eschew.

Wouldn't you?

Undoubtedly he hunted long and hard in the thesaurus for "eschew," which must be one of the juiciest words in the language, and he ushers in that word purely for the juice. The word "eschew" appears again in a "Punctuation Note":

Wise old Solon
Eschewed the colon;
However, Saint Thomas
Was lavish with commas.

I am amazed how in much of his light verse, no matter how trivial his subject matter, he includes the listener in his verbal games ("Wouldn't you?"). He never, as he says in "Lady Poet (of Either Sex)," "Toys with mystic/ Rapture and terror—/ All in a narcissistic/ Mirror." In another poem he softens the solemnity of Darwin's formulation with wordplay and word-sounds.

Luck

The mastodon and dinosaur
Are absolutely obsolete.
The moa, roc, with all their stock,
Are now, distinctly, quite extinct.
But why repine and why deplore
What nature chooses to delete?
We might have been, sans kith or kin,
Irrevocably missing-linked.

But always behind the game lurks serious consequences. The very word "poised" (in "An Idea Escapes") suggests precariousness.

Many Races I Have Run

Many races I have run
With fate, and fate has always won.

Often less than by the inch
Of an intuition's flinch;

Often less than by the flash
Signalling: "Faith will crash!"

Often less than can be reckoned
By what
Is but an inert spot
Within a second.

But most
I've lost
By the same mischance—
One back glance.

A poem called "Two Stars" dramatizes "the hairline between the just-too-much and the not-quite-enough": "The refinement of the cloudy general into its luminous particulars." A simple movement becomes a dialogue with nature—more than that: an act of mercy.

Two Stars

Two stars lie caught in a tree.

A shriveling angle
Of sight,—that snares a star in a tangle
Of leaves,—that shrinks a star to a spangle!

I have only to stand to free them,
To step three steps, to see them

Clear of earth and true to sky,
Eye to eye.

Two stars rose from a tree.

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The commitment to the precise word or image "so dear to man's concern" transforms itself into the wordplay of the light verse, but even there light poems are not all froth. Underlying the bulk of these poems is that sense that the game hides more serious concerns, and that the awareness of wordplay, sounds and rhythms always shields an acute sense of man's link to his environment. The life in "the dungeon" is concealed beneath these word games. Henry Morton Robinson considers Melville Cane's writing of light verse "as a species of psychic dart-throwing that relieves the poet when his inner tensions mount to unresolvable pressures."

Most of what has preceded has been merely a question of giving form to a conception of Melville Cane's poetry which has ripened but not significantly changed for several years. But the conclusion I have found in the Jewish, and more specifically in the Hasidic, tradition. At first the juxtaposition of this urbane, eminently twentieth-century lawyer with the highly mystic and visionary tradition of an earlier, simpler world may seem bizarre (it is difficult, for example, to imagine him bearded, swaying in his prayer shawl, praying loudly, musically), but many of his poetic ideals and subjects would find a comfortable home in the writings of Hasidism. First there is the innately active, creative ingredient in all things that becomes holy when man verifies it. The Baal Shem Tov says, "All that man has, his servant, his animals, his tools, all conceal sparks that belong to the roots of his soul and wish to be raised by him to their origin," and "All things of this world that belong to him desire with all their might to draw near him in order that the sparks of holiness that are in them should be raised by him. . . . It is known that each spark that dwells on a stone or plant or another creature has a complete figure with the full number of limbs and sinews and, when it dwells in the stone or plant, it is in prison, cannot stretch out its hands and feet and cannot speak, but its head lies on its knees. And who in the strength of his spirit is able to raise the holy spark from stone to plant, from plant to animal, from animal to speaking being, he leads it into freedom and no setting free of captives is greater than this. It is as when a king's son is rescued from captivity and brought to his father." This fire within everything is an image in Melville Cane's poetry not only as a symbol of that active, creative ingredient but also as a symbol of the divinity in things, and as such it should be nurtured and allowed to "flower." His poetry is his way of consecrating nature's acts, of raising them to holiness, of liberating them from oblivion.

The Fly

A big black buzzing fly,
So safe in the open sky,
Has blundered into the room
And begins its battle with doom.
With dashes and loops
It bashes and swoops
And bangs again and again
At the window-pane.

I sit at my desk to write,
Entrapped in the creature's plight.
Has it lost the power of sight?
Has it missed the invisible crack
To the pathway back?

The fly, safe in his Paradise, the open sky, has blundered (his Original Sin!) into a room, his prison. His efforts to escape are blind and chaotic and destructive, like the imprisoned forces of our unconscious. The poem horrifies us. Adam is a creature of disgust, the freedom and energy of unfallen man perverted. But we pity him and sense his helplessness. The fly's predicament looks grim—is man's? The poet empathizes totally, "entrapped in the creature's plight." But man must look for the invisible crack and in so doing will save both the fly and himself.

To write poetry is more than just that: it is to have mercy—it is to love. For him "nature" includes "all man's possessions," as the Baal Shem Tov says, what lies about him but also what lies within him. The divine spark is without and within—to have mercy on a plant at the conclusion of "Rural Dungheap" is to have mercy on his own soul:

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O man, where is thy victory?
Despite this blight of tins,
The fern persists and cleaves and wins,
And, gladly, spring begins.

We have spoken earlier about Melville Cane's poetry as a celebration. It is also a ritual—a continual celebration of essentially the same act, yet an act perpetually calling for celebration. According to the Baal Shem Tov, "Repetition, the power which weakens and decolors so much in human life, is powerless before ecstasy, which catches fire again and again from precisely the most regular, most uniform events." Cane is a religious poet if for no other reason than that almost every poem exhibits a predictable ritualistic shape, a consistent dynamic flow, nature's creative process—colored by the infinite variety of life itself. I recall a discussion I had with him concerning the format of his collection *So That It Flower*. The question was, should he arrange the poems chronologically or according to topic, theme, or simply whim? Now it does not surprise me that he chose the second alternative, since except for his earliest work he has been celebrating the same things in pretty much the same way throughout his life—chronology loses some of its importance.

And always, as in the images of Hasidism, there is the spark, such as at the end of "Intimations": "I have seen/ Light within Dark/ Immanent spark,/ Deep and serene." It appears triumphantly at the conclusion of "We are as Fireflies."

Rising above the grasses
A flurry of wings passes
Over gardens, under spheres;
This is the song one hears:
"Far in the ground
Lost is found!
Up from the dark
A rescued spark!
Out of the grave
We will save
A kernel
Of eternal
Light. We will fly,
Swinging grains of light.
Sowing the fruitful sky,
We will put an end to night."

Behind all of Melville Cane's writing—and living—lies his understanding of good and evil and his ability to realize this understanding in practice. "Evil," he writes in *To Build a Fire*, "I define loosely and not in doctrinal or theological terms as anything tending to seduce us from our ordained course or to impair or destroy our will and our search toward self-realization." Once again he appears in the Hasidic tradition. "The only way to realize this individual potential is to depart from evil and do good," says Hasidism. Melville Cane responds similarly:

One habitual pattern of evil . . . appears in the masochistic aspect of "The Backward Glance," by which is meant self-flagellation over past failures, whether of lost opportunities or nonsuccess in performance . . .:

Beware the vain lament,
The hunger for what's spent.
This is dead-sea fruit
And ashes to the taste.
Quash it with your foot.
What is past is past.

The first step in rehabilitating the soul is in asking the question, "Why have I suffered?" Make the suffering, the failure, an experience and move on.

"In the time I am brooding over it I could be stringing pearls for the delight of Heaven," says the tradition. One should attempt to take the stance of cool detachment and devote one's energy to observation, to doing good, to writing poems. One gains perspective and defeats self-inflicted torment, one evolves harmony from distortion, order from chaos. And with this remark we see once again the ever-present spirit of this man's creative output. The ultimate resolution is not really that but rather the more active task, prayer.

This is the task, the prayer—that I may save
The suffering god within, that he may live,
And greatly live, beyond the grave.

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Letter from Europe

ANTHONY BURGESS

My previous letters to the SCHOLAR were all from London, or at least from England. Readers, I think, must listen with greater attention to what comes from the capital than what comes from the country—a matter of the beef extract cube rather than its dilution in cafeteria broth. A letter from Europe must, then, seem hopelessly diffused and washy and, seated as I am in a decaying *palazzo* in Malta (on Malta, really), I am not even sure whether I can claim to be, in Donne's phrase, a part of the continent. I am in, or on, the Mediterranean, where nothing happens except repressive baroque Catholicism, the odd bark from a retired colonial administrator, and the daily net full of ugly fish with apotropaic names. At this season—a week off Christmas—not even the sun happens all that much, and the nights are forlorn with gales and worn copies of American TV series so old as to be historic. A dull or cold day on the Middle Sea depresses far more than a whole wretched December in London or New York: one recognizes that one isn't getting what one came for—sun—and that there's very little else one could conceivably come for.

This is true of Malta certainly. The island is small, although traffic congestion provides an illusion of greater space, and a month or so will exhaust its visual curiosities. There are the inevitable Roman remains, and there are far more baroque churches and cathedrals than seem necessary for so small a population. One gets the impression, from so much holy architecture, of a big commercial guilt lying somewhere back in history—as with the churches of East Anglia (wealth in wool) and Bristol (slavery). This business of the Knights of Malta had, we are told, more to do with Eastern trade routes than with driving the Mussulman from the Holy Places. It's depressing to bring all this almost edible honey-colored stone back to economics, but we can't shuffle off our Marxist, any more than our Freudian, heritage.

The Maltese themselves—the lowly generality, anyway—are not much aware of the erosions of Freud, Marx and the logical positivists on their religion. Not even Ireland or South Lancashire can touch Malta for iconic manifestations of piety. Lighted shrines make the night hideous; there are even shrines in the buses. If there is a secular art exhibition or a flower show in Sliema or Valletta, the Governor's wife (who has the delicious name of Lady Tory) performs the opening ceremony, but the Archbishop follows quickly with a smiling aspersion of holy water. The Church's thumbprint—like St. Peter's on the haddock—shows firmly in the films one may see, either on television or in the cinema. I have never seen so much violence on television before, but the violence is there to keep out the sex. The girls of Valletta are, like their sisters in London, aggressively miniskirted, but few of them are allowed to stay out after dark. Commercial sex, as in so many Catholic countries, flourishes but is reserved to a tolerated red-light district—Strait Street, or "the Gut." (The best account of Valletta nightlife is to be found, by the way, in an American novel—

ANTHONY BURGESS' LONDON LETTER has appeared regularly in the SCHOLAR since Spring, 1967.

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Thomas Pynchon's *V.*) Many Maltese will tell you that the Gut no longer exists, as Leningraders will point to a carious public building and insist that it has been newly painted. But no Southern Catholic city provides an exception to the Great Anomaly: keep your daughters safe from sin by driving some of them into brothels.

The students of the Royal University of Malta, like students everywhere, are blowing fresh air through the corridors of cant, and there are signs that the Church is no longer having all its own way in the area of secular behavior. I have come into contact, by the way, with only one student, and that was by post. A Mr. Aquilina (whom I imagine as having a snub nose) wrote to me while I was still in England and asked me whether I would mind answering a questionnaire. One of the questions was hard to deal with politely, but, as a prospective guest of the Maltese, I did my best. It was: "In writing your *Shorter Finnegans Wake,* were you much under the influence of James Joyce?" I was interested to see, in the Christmas number of the Sunday *Times* of Malta, that this questionnaire and my answers were published as a newspaper interview. I suppose Mr. Aquilina got some money out of it: he deserved to because of his cheek. Or enterprise.

The new Malta of tourism and closed shipyards prides itself on its enterprise. Before going further, I had better say what, constitutionally speaking, this new Malta is. The old Malta—the Malta of, say, the film *Malta Story,* which I saw again on Los Angeles TV four or five three-in-the-mornings ago—was a colony of the British and virtually controlled by the Admiralty in London. It was a link in the chain of depots of British naval power stretching from Gibraltar to Hong Kong. When Britain threw off the chain, Malta found itself with its main source of livelihood gone—the British Navy. It got self-government, of course, since it was no longer worth Britain's while to do the governing itself, although the office of British governor remains. That Britain has no power over Malta is best exemplified by my own present position. I applied to the Immigration Department in Valletta last August for permission to reside on the island. I still await a decision. If the Immigration Department decides to say "No," there is no flag I can wave or gunboat I can threaten with. Maltese, being Commonwealth citizens, flood into Britain and settle permanently there; there seems to be no reciprocal arrangement.

And yet Malta, rightly, wants money. One way of getting money is to encourage people who, like myself, earn their money anywhere except in Malta, to come and settle on the island. They put out gaudy brochures with the title *Living in Malta,* crammed with a prospectus of Maltese delights, but behind the smile and the beckoning hand lie the little bureaucrats whose lives depend on delay, quibbling and the accumulation of paper. If French bureaucracy is, however maddening, based on logic, Maltese bureaucracy borrows from Italy in being primarily metaphysical, even mystical. I rang up some obscure figure in the Electricity Department, with a view to having the supply turned on at my house, and, I swear, at one point in the long discussion, I heard the words, "Let us discuss the nature of electricity." So, in the Roman *Questura,* whither my Italian wife had to go to get a new passport, the phrase *"Discutiamo la natura dell' identità"* came up from an official ogling her under a plaque of the Sacred Heart.

Incidentally, nobody ever came to my house to turn on the supply. The ancient gardener, who goes with the property, found a way of doing that himself (hairpins and old screwdrivers came into it). Similarly, having been smilingly promised a telephone in three years or so ("You have no conception of the length of the waiting list, although we could spend a profitable morning considering why this is so. To start with, we have to be reborn after so many decades of stultifying colonial rule," *et cetera, et cetera*), I was not surprised when the gardener's second cousin's brother-in-law installed a telephone for us, finding the requisite engines in his tool shed. This means being ex-directory for ever, but I would have wanted to choose that anyway.

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Maltese enterprise is best seen in the private sector, although the Maltese week is capable of stretching to a fortnight, and promises made by carpenters and plumbers are like the Church's promises of eventual beatitude. But the people in charge of tourism are doing their best, and some of the new hotels compare with anything I have visited in America. What is lacking is a decent cuisine. And, for those of us who care about such things, (immigrant subscribers to THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, for instance), there is a certain lack of cultural sustenance. There are festal bands and organ recitals in the co-cathedral (where hangs that superb Caravaggio of John the Baptist's decapitation), but there are no real bookshops and few minority-appeal films. For the philologist, however, there is the Maltese language, and there's no lack of sustenance there.

Since Maltese has no cosmopolitan appeal, it is something of a shock to see chic lady television announcers speaking the language as though it had the status of South American Spanish. There is no chauvinistic promotion of the virtually dead tongue—still the position in Ireland—but, instead, an apparently unselfconscious confidence in the capacity of a minor language to accommodate itself to the demands of the big technological world. Malay, a simple fisherman's or paddy-planter's tongue, had, when independence for Malaya was looming, some trouble in finding terms for *UNO, industrial unrest,* and *horizontal hold.* But Maltese benefits from drawing on two sophisticated contiguous cultures—that of the Arabs and that of the Italians. The Maltese people themselves are mainly Phoenician in origin. When Arabic, a cognate Semitic language, was imposed on them in the course of the long history of invasion, there was presumably no difficulty in taking to the Arabic habit of staking out ideas with three consonants (K-T-B, for instance, gives the general idea of *writing*) and making particular semantic points by ringing changes on vowels. Maltese is powerfully Semitic, although its speakers are powerfully Christian (it's strange to see the Christian God as *Alla*), but it has no difficulty in absorbing Italian words. We say *grazi* and *ciao* and *buona sera* and call ladies *sinjura,* but "Merry Christmas" hides in the lineaments of a language that rejects Christmas—*Il-Milied It-Tajjeb.* It's all very fascinating. Whether this language, with its tensions that would seem to be so creatively suggestive, has produced anything like a literature—well, this is something I have to find out. The danger is that the finding out may get in the way of my own literary projects. And the furthering of those was the real reason for coming to Malta.

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OF WRITING AND WRITERS

Literary Scenes in the Soviet Union

BABETTE DEUTSCH

Recently I came upon a line of verse that stuck in my mind, although unfortunately the author's name did not: "Seventy years go as quick as a dollar." Even those who have not achieved three-score-and-ten will probably share my liking for this metaphor. Those who have will recognize that old age, along with its immitigable evils, affords also its special pleasures. Among these is the remembrance of things past. Not, of course, faults, errors, griefs, but certain delightful or fascinating events and persons; experiences that a later generation may parallel but that, being unique, are unrepeatable.

"Ah, did you once see Shelley plain?" I did. But the name was Mayakovsky. Or Akhmatova. Or that of some other literary figure no more to be met with except in his or her work. I was in Moscow briefly in 1962, but back in the fall and winter of 1923-24 I spent some five months in the Soviet Union. At that time I visited three cities: Moscow, Petrograd and Leningrad. We were there when Lenin died, and when Peter's city was renamed, with thoughtless sentimentality, for the hero of the Revolution. When we arrived in the U.S.S.R. Trotsky was still one of the revolutionary heroes. I recall a production by Meyerhold (and the man's vigorous gestures and horsey face) that was dedicated to Trotsky. When his picture was flashed on the screen above the proscenium arch there was loud applause, whistling and applausive stamping, especially on the part of the more youthful members of the audience.

During most of our stay in Moscow we lived in a house occupied by the Quakers and a few others, including William Henry Chamberlin, then the Russian correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor.* Lenin died on January 21, 1924. January 22 was the nineteenth anniversary of Bloody Sunday. Chamberlin received news of Lenin's death in advance of less privileged characters. Thanks to him, when we went out into the streets and saw hanging from many windows red flags edged with black, we knew that the crape symbolized mourning for the victims of 1905—news of Lenin's death had not yet reached the public.

At the time there happened to be a Congress of representatives from all the Republics in the Union. We had been at the session the previous day but were unable to get in the day that the announcement was made. Afterward we saw the delegates filing out. I remember some rough-looking men with red eyes that they were wiping with the backs of their hands, exotic characters in capes and tall hats, and one little ivory-cheeked Tartar, a gaily embroidered cap on his ebony hair, crying like a child into a colored handkerchief.

We met the train in which Lenin's body was brought to Moscow from the village where he died. There were cordons of soldiers everywhere, people grouped under red and black banners, bands playing the revolutionary funeral march. The red coffin was carried by Kalinin, Zinoviev and other notables, over snow strewn with evergreens, between lines of soldiers, some of whom were weeping openly. The body lay in

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state in the Trade Union Hall (formerly the Hall of Nobles) with a guard of honor that changed every ten minutes. For three days and three nights lines of men and women, four abreast, wound up and down and around the streets, waiting for hours in a temperature below freezing for a two minute glimpse of Lenin. More than one street was black with people who had not fallen into line, with sometimes a banner making a dark crimson silhouette, a fog going up from people's breaths and from the steaming horses of the militia herding them. At night the great black serpent moved along the snowy streets, here and there a few wrestling to keep warm or dancing around the bonfires that punctuated the dark queues. There was a steady hum from the hundreds who were talking quietly, with now and then a shout from the militia. But a hush fell on the people as they entered the hall, and they moved up the broad marble stairs in utter silence. One old peasant woman murmured in our hearing: "How many guests our Lenin has today!" I am no Leninist, but it was a most moving experience. William Chamberlin told us of seeing another old woman cracking sunflower seeds and weeping at the same time.

I got to the U.S.S.R. because my husband, Avrahm Yarmolinsky, as Chief of the Slavonic Division of the New York Public Library, was commissioned to buy what books he could from the Czar's library and from other fine collections that were being dispersed. He also went to complete his researches for his biography of Turgenev. I tagged along. Incidentally, we had met through a friend who thought that a Russian scholar and an American poet might collaborate on a translation of *The Twelve*, Alexander Blok's world-famous poem of the Revolution. Our first version of it appeared in the old *Freeman*. Years later William Rudge issued a deluxe edition that was illustrated by George Biddle. A revised version of our translation of the poem appears in our recent anthology, *Two Centuries of Russian Verse, from Lomonosov to Voznesensky*.

About the Czar's library I know nothing, but I recall a visit to the Winter Palace in Leningrad and seeing in one of the rooms a bookcase with volumes that had belonged to the Czarina. Glancing at the English titles, I discovered several hammock novels by C. N. and A. M. Williamson. It seemed odd to me that the Czarina had apparently been entertained by what had amused me in the callowest days of my youth.

As for the researches for the Turgenev biography, these included a visit to Professor Koni, probably the last living representative of the circle that had known the novelist. As usual, we had to mount a dirty stone staircase and enter the apartment through the kitchen (later I was told that this was because of fear of thieves), to which we were admitted by a white-faced old witch who looked like a genial troll. From the kitchen we passed into a drawing room, where Professor Koni, a bent, bald old man with a square beard, wearing his overcoat against the chill, was sitting with a pretty young girl and a group of children, presumably his grandchildren. They made a particular impression on me because in speaking of Turgenev, more than once our host dwelt on how the novelist would bewail the cold lot of a bachelor perched on the edge of another man's nest. Of course, Turgenev had a daughter, Pauline Viardot's namesake and her charge, and Mme. Viardot's children were like his own, but the loneliness remained. Professor Koni made Turgenev's plight more vivid when he mentioned visiting him in a room where the dust was an inch thick, and again spoke of Turgenev unable to button his coat because one button was missing and another hanging by a thread. Turgenev's old friend was as uncertain as everyone else as to the precise nature of the novelist's involvement with Mme. Viardot, the singer with whom all Europe was in love, but he did make the man come alive for us.

We had been in Moscow only a few days when we had a visit from Vladimir Mayakovsky. He arrived at eleven at night and stayed on into the small hours. He was a tall, vigorous man, his hair close-clipped, Russian-fashion, so that it looked like vel-

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vet pile. He spoke, in a deep resonant voice, simply and unaffectedly. Indeed, he seemed quite unlike the legend of him with which we were familiar. When he was asked whether in his youth he had paraded down the Nevsky wearing a bright yellow blouse and with roses painted on his cheeks (apparently Flower People are not new), he laughed, admitting to the conspicuous blouse but denying the painted roses.

He had not heard of *Ulysses,* but when we spoke of it he declared that rather than a novel of six hundred pages devoted to twenty-four hours, he would prefer one of six pages devoted to twenty-four years. He wanted to pare everything down to the bone. He went on to speak of the work of a man who had written a novel in fifty lines. This was Isaac Babel. We were to hear about him on every side.

Another great theme with Mayakovsky was constructivism. As I understand it, this means verse grounded on science and technology, and employed to help build a socialist culture. To an American poet their introduction of a new prosody was of special interest. This was a "time prosody," the number of syllables in the lines varying, and without any set pattern of stresses, but each line being of approximately equal duration with every other. Not long since, the *New Yorker* carried a piece on constructivist painting, which was also important in Russia nearly fifty years ago. As for painting, I recall with special delight a small museum of Western art, with many works by Gauguin, and the strange effect of looking from those canvases, hugely aglow, toward the windows that framed a small park, every twig on every tree gloved in glittering ice. I also recall a painter who announced to us: "My spectrum is white."

A couple of nights after his visit we dined with Mayakovsky. I was astonished at the presence of a maidservant (I learned that she was paid in board and lodging) and at the variety and abundance of the food. In my ignorance I took the *zakuska* for the main course. This was just after the close of the famine period, and one of the Quakers who had returned from the worst famine area told us that there had been cannibalism there. The decor of the large, rather shabby room in which we ate and talked was moderately futuristic, with a few beautiful things, among them a Bokharan rug. The evening reminded me of evenings in the Village of those days, except for the politico-economic *Stimmung.* Mayakovsky maintained a *ménage à trois* with Osip and Lily Bryk, the sister of Elsa Triolet, Aragon's wife. Osip Bryk was one of the leaders of LEF (Left Front of the Arts), the *avant-garde* movement that succeeded futurism in Russia.

Mayakovsky held forth on poetry as engineering, using words instead of more substantial materials. He claimed that poetry *must* be propagandist. He had worked for ROSTA, the Russian telegraphic agency, essentially a publicity bureau for the regime, and had composed thousands of slogans, had painted posters, had written yards of propagandist verse. He bellowed some of his poems for us, but when he recited "Our March" it was truly sonorous. Here are the first and last stanzas:

> Slog the squares with rebel tramping!
> Higher, crags of haughty heads!
> We will wash the worlds' cities
> With the surge of a second flood.
>
> Drink to joy! Sing!
> Spring has flooded our blood.
> Heart, beat, leap!
> Our breasts are crashing brass.*

Mayakovsky said that he had "stepped on the throat of his song," put himself at the service "of the present hour, the immediate actuality, and its builders: the Soviet Government and the Party." But he was so notable a technician that even this could not kill his poems. His craftsmanship triumphed over the propaganda. We spent Christmas night at Mayakovsky's, where we heard more about LEF from Osip Bryk. They were interested in propaganda for a mechanical civilization, he said. America was a fast ship going nowhere; Russia

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wanted to go somewhere but had no tools. She was Asiatic, a law unto herself. The telephone was more valuable than a Bokharan rug. There was much talk about the government, which Bryk said was in the hands of a triumvirate, Zinoviev, Kamenev and, I wrote in my journal, "a third man whose name I forget—Oh, yes, Stalin." Bryk spoke worshipfully of Lenin (who was to die within a few weeks), whom he admired particularly for never discussing what he didn't understand, such as art. As for the members of LEF, they held that an artist must have a program. "There are artists without a program," said Bryk, "and there are such people, too. But they are not the best people." Even in this pro-Communist household, however, there was a Christmas tree, for Yankele, the squirrel.

In 1930, at the age of thirty-seven, Mayakovsky shot himself. Lily Bryk told Pauline de Rothschild, who saw her some two years ago on a trip to the U.S.S.R., commemorated in her delightful little book, *The Irrational Journey,* that he committed suicide because "he couldn't bear to grow old." At the time it was said to be because of an unhappy love affair. I thought it was an unhappy love affair with the Communist Party. Pasternak declared that Stalin's calling him the greatest Soviet poet was his "second death." A few lines of his last, unfinished poem were inserted in his suicide note. It concludes:

We've settled our accounts, and there's no reason
In listing mutual pains, griefs, injuries.
Just see how still it is. Night lays a starry
Tax on the sky. You get up and converse,
At such an hour as this, with all the ages,
With history, and with the universe.

There is a subway station named for Mayakovsky, with an idealized bust of him, and, as everyone knows, crowds of young people flock to the square named for him, to listen to poetry recitals by such men as Yevtushenko and Voznesensky. The statue on the square is unrecognizable to someone who remembers him: not tall enough, not imposing enough, and leaning forward as if about to run, whereas his movements were deliberate; a face without character, and an absurdly conventional costume. A young guide who accompanied me to a movie in 1962 expressed extravagant admiration for Mayakovsky. He compared him to Yevtushenko, to the latter's disadvantage: Yevtushenko looked too bohemian. When I mentioned the story of Mayakovsky's march down the Nevsky wearing a noisy yellow blouse (and in one version of the tale leading a lobster on a string), the young man looked at me incredulously and observed in a tone of reproval that he always thought of Mayakovsky as wearing a dark suit and a neat tie. His ignorance was amusing, as that of another guide, who helped me shop, was not. When, on the Red Square, we passed the ancient stone that had served as the executioner's block under Ivan the Terrible, and perhaps even earlier, now in disrepair and overgrown with grass, she remarked: "Our children don't even know what it means." With a deep sense of frustration, I forebore to mention the Purges, the camps, the assorted horrors connected with the dictatorship.

Russian crowds attending poetry recitals are nothing new. Back in the autumn of 1923 there was a meeting in celebration of the fifth anniversary of the Union of Poets that was crammed to the doors. The meeting was held in the low white building, set in a park, in which Alexander Herzen was born. The crowd was dense, but my companion held on to my hand, urging and pulling me forward. By strenuous pulling and pushing and shouts of *"Amerikanski poet! Amerikanski poet!"* we managed to get inside. Valery Bryusov presided. This leader of the Moscow symbolists, who had only a year to live, was the author of a poem called "The Coming Huns" in which he saluted these representatives of the Revolution, and which concludes:

And we, the poets, the wise,
Shall be true to the treasures we save,
Hiding the torch you despise
In catacomb, desert, and cave.

Where angry lightnings glance,
Where tempests raven and tear,

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What will the play of chance
From our long labors spare?

All that we alone knew
May be blotted out by your whim.
Yet you who destroy me, you—
I salute with hosanna and hymn.

From the meeting of the Union of Poets we went on to a poets' café called Pegasus' Stable. It was decorated with futuristic murals through which staggered the name of Yesenin. There we met his friend, Anatoly Marienhof, looking very elegant, especially because of his broadbrimmed black felt hat. His appearance contrasted with his poems, which coarsely and violently praise the Revolution. One of them begins: "We trample filial obedience"—the mildest line in it. The nearest approach to such verse in contemporary work is that of the Liverpool group in England. We had drinks, heard some gypsy singing, and so back to our lodgings, through the moonlit streets of a Moscow wrapped in magic, with only a few lit windows in the ghostly houses, one couple moving through the dark, and no light save what came from the kerosene lamps behind the house numbers and from the pale sky.

A more interesting assembly was that of the Petrograd section of the All-Russian Union of Writers. This was held in the House of Scholars, formerly a ducal palace. The only signs of change were a bust of Marx on a mantelpiece and a portrait of him, looking like a mid-nineteenth-century bourgeois, that hung on a brocaded wall. Good stories were read by several novelists, including Yevgeny Zamyatin. He was an attractive, delightful man, with brilliant blue eyes and a smile that was like the brief dazzle of a Fourth of July sparkler. He once astonished me by announcing: "I made Lenin." It appeared that the novelist had designed the battleship *Lenin*: he was a naval architect. His novel, *We,* which has been translated into English, presents a powerfully moving picture of the years of deprivation immediately following the Revolution. It was through Zamyatin that we met the self-styled Serapion Brothers, a group of writers who felt that only a fantastic literature would be adequate to the fantastic times, although when we met them there were some realists among them, and they were united rather by friendship than by literary theories. During one of the evenings that we spent with them—in a firelit, book-lined room, paneled in mahogany, boasting a grand piano, a magnificent rug, and rich with old-fashioned furniture, which our host delighted in as "a real English room"—Babel's story, "Salt," that we had heard at Mayakovsky's, was read with the same enthusiasm. It was at an evening at Zamyatin's that we met a writer who had done Blake into Russian but was now reduced to writing juveniles. When we returned to Russia in the sixties Zamyatin was not there to greet us: he had expatriated himself to Paris, where he took his life.

Our stay in Petrograd was distinguished by the many hours, often the small hours, that we spent with Korney Ivanovich Chukovsky. His name may not be as widely known here as that of his daughter, Lydia Chukovskaya, who was the leader of those Russian writers protesting against the prison sentences of Daniel and Sinyavsky. Chukovsky is a man of letters, familiar with English and American literature, a man of catholic tastes, who enjoys both Henry James and Samuel Butler, and who has translated Whitman. The preface to the translation says that the reader will be introduced to democratic vistas, but the section, Democratic Vistas, was cut by the Soviet censor as being "too mystical." With the advent of the Revolution, such honest, subtle criticism as Chukovsky wrote was no longer publishable. He took to writing juveniles and is now the dean of authors writing for the Russian young. He is a tall, magnificent figure of a man, with a slightly outsize nose that illustrators sometimes caricature. Akhmatova used to call him "the gray-haired boy." He was white-haired when we saw him again in 1962, but as erect and vigorous as ever: running up and down the stairs of his Peredelkino *dacha* to greet visitors or see them off, walking us over to the children's library that he had established and then to the site of the children's theater that he

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was having built. At the library the children flocked to him, their attitude mingling somewhat awed respect with obvious affection. There were entertaining pictures on the library walls done by the local youngsters, mostly self-portraits. I recall especially a solemn little boy wearing spectacles and a rather quizzical one whose face was mostly freckles. Chukovsky made a point of showing us a few things in color that he proudly, and correctly, nominated "abstractions," also, of course, done by the children.

When he trotted us about in Petrograd in 1924, introducing us to the novelist, Count Alexis Tolstoy, to this actor, that theater director, and the other artist, he would, when not conversing, burst into song or quote poems, in Russian or in English. When we visited him at Peredelkino in the summer of 1962, in the same rich strong voice he kept reciting snatches of verse, bits of "The Walrus and the Carpenter," or a stanza of some English lyric. In his study I noticed among the books in English one by Ogden Nash, Whitehead's *Modes of Thought* and the *Oxford Companion to English Literature.* He had recently been to England to receive an honorary degree from Oxford. It was hard to tell which he enjoyed most: parading in the handsome gray gown faced with scarlet worn on that occasion or in the Indian headdress sent him, I think, by some Canadian children. It should be added that the parade was largely for the benefit of some small fry who had come with his adult visitors. He *is* a white-haired boy. One index to the streak of naïveté in him is that he thought it possible to have my husband's book, *Road to Revolution,* done into Russian. One chapter was actually translated, but it did not take long for the authorities to declare the work "counter-revolutionary." To which Chukovsky's comment was: "Wait ten years!" In the twenties we had heard from another writer a report of a conversation with Kamenev in which our informant had said: "If you gave us freedom of speech and press, the best of the intelligentsia would be with you, would work for you, not for money as some do now, but wholeheartedly, for certainly no one wants to see the old order come back, no one wants capitalism, no one wants to take the land away from the peasants." Kamenev had replied that they were living as in a fortress, but that in ten years, then—. To which our friend had retorted: "In ten years the people will be educated into slavery." One can only hope that Chukovsky's prophecy was as true.

When I spoke to him of a contemporary poet as loyal to the regime, Chukovsky asserted that the man professed Communism in order to put his views across. He had in his desk, he affirmed, poems that told another story. He went on to say that the young people hated not only Stalin, but Lenin and Communism. And he spoke of the underground movement in literature and of the poems circulated only in manuscript.

Mention was made above of Anna Akhmatova. When she died there was a picture of her in the *Times.* I could not believe that the stout old party whom I saw there was the same person as the tallish slender woman with the blue-black hair and irregular features, lovely when she spoke or smiled, whom we had seen in Petrograd in 1923. She lived with Soudekina in two rooms, one always cold, the other crowded with icons, bibelots, porcelain, and the dolls that Soudekina sculptured. It was Akhmatova who took us to Tsarskoe Selo, where she had spent her childhood and girlhood. The chief interest there was Catherine the Great's white and green rococo palace, which has the longest enfilade of rooms in the world. There was nothing about it to remind one that the Empress had made a friend of Voltaire (at the Hermitage we had seen the books that he had given her, with the marginal notes in his fine spidery hand). Tsarskoe Selo astonished me less by its palatial character than by the fact that Catherine's bedroom was so small and, above all, her bed so narrow. There was one unforgettable room—the amber room; the walls were inlaid with amber; the furnishings were of the same warm-colored substance; every object that could be amber

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was so: amber boxes in all shapes and sizes, an amber hourglass, an amber chess set. You could be warm in that room in the midst of a Russian winter.

Even before the Purges Akhmatova had suffered severely, but she remained in Russia. Mayakovsky was brutally coarse about her. "If she's cold," he once said, "let her be a kept woman and be warm." She stayed cold. It might more truly be said that she was warmed by the invisible fires of her devotion to her native land, to her native language and to the art that she practiced with such melodiousness, subtlety and intensity. That she was able to write love lyrics in old age, witness these lines, "From The Oriental Note-Book":

How drunk we were, each with the other, that
marvelous night,
when only the Asian darkness gave us light,
and the irrigation canals were murmuring
and the black carnations' scent pierced like a
sting.

And we walked alone through a city not ours,
through a savage song
and midnight heat—the Serpent coiled among
the constellations in the thick-starred skies,
and we did not dare to turn and meet one
another's eyes.

And it seemed as if ages walked with us, unseen,
and as if an invisible hand were striking a
tambourine,
and there were stranger sounds, like something
we must mark:
secret signals that whirled about us there in
the dark.

Thus once, and only once, we walked together,
as though
we had got into no human story, and, of a
sudden, the glow
of the moon like a diamond sailboat swam
into view
over our parting meeting, the single encounter
we knew.

And should that night return to you also, mind
my wish, however belated, oh, be kind
and send me, waking or dreaming, by my choice
this: an Asian reed pipe's slender voice.

There is, too, of course, the remarkable sequence, *Requiem,* not yet published in the U.S.S.R., that Akhmatova dedicated to the victims of the Red Terror (her son was among them). A stanza may give some inkling of the character of these poems.

This was when no one smiled, none but the
dead,
Glad of peace, of final immunity,
And, like a useless appendage, Leningrad
Swung around its prisons, hopelessly.

In one of the last of them she asks that if a monument is ever to be raised to her, it should not be near her birthplace or the scenes of her early life, but where for three hundred hours she had stood, with the other miserable relatives and friends of the prisoners—she feared lest death make her

Forget the dread door whose clang never ceased
And an old woman's howl like a wounded beast.

It seems not improbable that Akhmatova might recognize in a few young poets now writing a sensibility akin to her own, if expressing itself, of course, in a different fashion. A simple yet delicate lyric, called "Smoke," by Novella Matveyeva, is a case in point:

A thicket.
Frost.
The air coarse as a brush.
But light is tender, winterily shy.
The houses are withdrawn.
Alone from the red chimneys gushes
Smoke that rolls freely, soaking in the sky.
Like memories of distant days,
that slept for years,
In a hushed pause it scans itself, and then
Fades into twilight . . .
but not before it draws
Upon the sky soft images of warmth . . .
itself erasing them . . .
I love the smoke at dusk, in frosty silence!
It gives a pleasure somehow cordial
to just glance at the smoke,
think of a fire—
And . . . to resist
as comfort calls.

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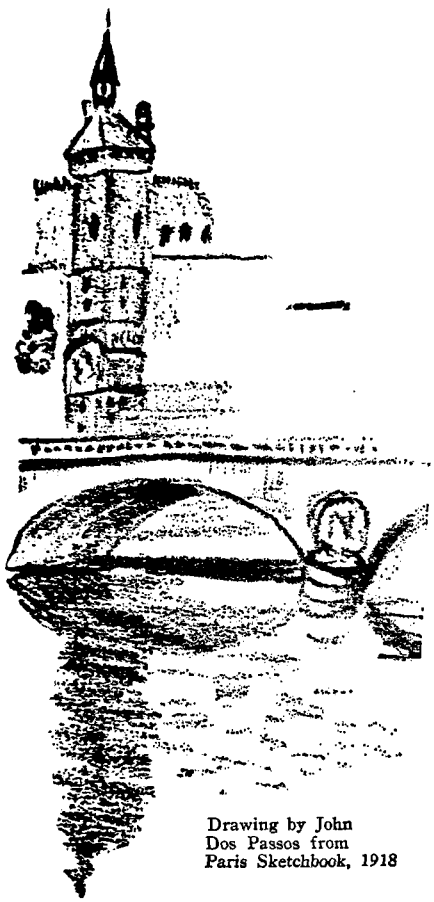
By JOHN DOS PASSOS



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PETER SHAW

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This was a relatively quiet time in Adams family history, and a decidedly fallow period in the life of Charles Francis Adams. Its most exciting events were the birth of a daughter, meetings of the Private Debating Society of Boston, the acceptance for publication of a few political articles, and summer visits with the bride's family in Medford and the groom's in Quincy, Massachusetts. In this Adams diary genteel Boston makes its first appearance in the family chronicle. Charles Francis goes downtown each morning with his "man," judiciously selects the staples for his household, stops in at the Athenaeum to see the foreign papers and borrow a book, calls at his father-in-law's office, has the Everetts to lunch back home. Mrs. Adams is not feeling too well in the evening, so Charles cuts short the portion of *Clarissa* that he reads aloud, then reads to himself his regular two numbers of Addison's *Spectator* before retiring. On Sunday Charles nods through both morning and afternoon services, having the preacher, usually Mr. Frothingham, to lunch in between.

After a couple of years Charles began to approve some of the sermons, but until then he was monumentally bored, even by Emerson, and disagreed when he was able to pay attention. Quite as uncomfortable in church as Huckleberry Finn, Charles never even thought of not attending, much less "lighting out." For he represented a strain in the American tradition just the opposite of that which glorified escape from civilization and cultivation of the ego. Charles Francis Adams' program was one of self-development through self-denial, and his diary was notable chiefly for the things that he would not do and the thoughts that he would not record. But if he was diffident about writing of them, the events of 1828-29 were never far from Charles Francis' secret thoughts, and as he pondered his father's crushing defeat, and his brother's suicide, it appeared to him that only the most draconian measures with himself,

* *Diary of Charles Francis Adams,* vols. 3, 4. Edited by Marc Friedlaender and L. H. Butterfield. Harvard University Press. $25.00 the set.

PETER SHAW is on leave from the State University of New York at Stony Brook as an associate editor for *Commentary*.

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seemingly the least talented Adams so far, would make it possible to redeem and carry on the family name.

George Washington Adams had been named for greatness, and had displayed exceptional talents, but he had been crushed by the responsibility of being an Adams. At his death Charles set himself the task of redeeming the time that George and he had wasted in youth. At moments of doubt he read his brother's papers, which were records of futility, burned most of them, and returned to his studies with renewed resolve. By the time he had built the perseverance he desired, Charles had destroyed most of his brother's literary remains. From what was left among the Adams papers and from Charles's remarks, it is evident that George habitually set himself tasks that he could not bring himself to complete. "His life," Charles wrote, "was a continued scene of virtuous resolutions, and vicious transgressions, of violent repentance and passionate repetition." In contrast, during the next few years Charles did not omit a day from his diary, leave a book or set of books unfinished, no matter how boring, nor fail to realize a resolve once it was taken. His worst "dissipation" was book buying, and his only observable lie was the claim that he had refrained from buying anything at a book auction followed by evidence a week later that he had.

Charles's serious reading was naturally in the classics, and there mostly in oratory. He translated both Demosthenes and Aeschines from the Greek and Cicero from the Latin, often writing out the English of his day's passage in the margins and usually reviewing it at the next session as well. Humane studies have probably never prepared men for life in any direct way; what one knew has never mattered so much as the fact that one knew it. Certainly no study could have been as apparently inappropriate as oratory was for Charles, who was the first of the introspective, private Adamses. Yet, although he never used it directly, his classical education was essential to him, as to his contemporaries. Charles's son, Henry Adams, was one of the first to complain that his education had not fitted him for life. He was right, of course, that knowledge had not for him been power, but he was off the mark when he blamed education, which always turns out to have been more or less irrelevant.

The break with family tradition by Henry Adams, however, did not lie in his being divorced from power, for his father, although he was prominent for a short time in the Free-Soil Party, and eventually achieved a certain public eminence, lived a life of scholarship at least as removed from public events as Henry's. Where Henry broke with tradition was in complaining of the world rather than of himself. In the diaries of Charles Francis Adams, like those of John Quincy Adams and John Adams before him, the sharpest criticism was reserved for the writer himself, who believed that he was, among other things, idle, lazy, socially awkward, and incapable of keeping his many resolves. Unfortunately, Henry Adams destroyed his youthful diaries, so that there is no way of knowing whether in his own pursuit of greatness he too had rehearsed the Adams liturgy of self-reproach.

The key word for the first three generations was "reputation." During their twenties the Adamses agonized in despair of ever achieving greatness. The attainment of some small success could lead only to even stronger self-abuse, as when Charles launched himself in the traditional Adams way by writing newspaper articles:

> On looking back this week, I find very little reason to be contented. Much of my time has been wasted, the remainder not properly improved. Writing for the Newspapers is not a very satisfactory Account to give of one's self. I wonder that I am tempted to do it. What good can it produce to me in any event? If reputation is to be sought, my way should lead to paths far higher than ephemeral politics.

This was not reputation in the ordinary sense. The Adamses sought fame only as a passing emblem in their quest for true greatness. Yet, they ironically suffered both their own strictures for not being sufficiently unworldly and the world's accusation that they were vain and ambitious men.

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Charles's anonymous newspaper tracts, like those of his father and, years later, of his own son Charles, were defenses by an Adams son of his father's politics. As it gradually became known that each Adams had adopted his predecessor's views, the charge of bias was usually added to that of ambition. Yet Charles's diary shows that he arrived independently at his father's conclusions. No family enemy could have been harder on John Quincy Adams than his son Charles, who lectured him on his inattention to finances, dismissed as self-indulgent his dabbling with his fruit trees, informed him that Demosthenes was a greater orator than Cicero, accused him of too much loving the public eye when he accepted the nomination to run for Congress—he should have been attending to his biography of John Adams, Charles kept insisting—and, finally, urged him not to state publicly his mistaken Antimasonic views. Only after slowly working his way along in his daily studies did Charles gradually come to decide that Cicero was the greater figure, or that the Masonic party was indeed a dangerous threat and that his father had been courageous to speak out against it. His eventual defense of his father's position, in the form of a series of Antimasonic newspaper articles, was hardly the bald favoritism it might superficially appear to have been.

Charles was rehearsing a familiar drama of Adams sons reluctantly and sometimes unwittingly arriving at their father's opinions. He found himself astonished after months of his independent study of rhetoric to come upon his own conclusions in his father's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory*. Later, when he finished preparing his review of Grahame's *History of the United States*, his views again turned out to coincide with his father's, and when he read John Adams' *Defence of the Constitutions*, he observed that "the Comments upon the Government of Lacaedemon are very much the same with mine made in the margin of Mably's book." He did not know that his marginal comments on Milo were also parallel with his grandfather's.

The Adams mind was emerging in Charles Francis Adams. But he was not yet, in his twenties, the sort of strong personality that one associates with the family, nor was he ever to be quite like "my impetuous, irascible but open hearted ancestor," John Adams. Still, even his casual observations betrayed family characteristics. His greatest pleasure, he began to realize, lay in performing his duty, which was typical. Even more typical was that in its very completion he could write: "I endeavour to keep up to the line of duty which my rigid sense of propriety marks out, and though not conscious yet of failure, the dread of it hangs still heavy on my mind." Charles sensed the Adams in himself, especially in his hardness of character, which he typically combatted with still further self-discipline. "With my unbending character," he wrote, "it is very necessary for me to keep *rigid* watch over my disposition." (Emphasis added.)

The Adamses watched themselves in their diaries. As much as they were records of events, these introspective chronicles were devices to foster self-knowledge and self-improvement. The early diaries of Charles Francis Adams, however, consciously attempted to avoid the intimate in favor of a simple record of events and studies. It was in another, missing book that Charles "poured out the current of my feelings at length." He attempted to stifle even the expression of his ambitions, the usual stuff of Adams diaries, deeming them "only fit for secret meditations." In short, Charles had neither high ambitions for nor a high opinion of his diary. He called it:

> a pretty monotonous record of the very even tenour of my life. I believe it is of use to a man to accustom himself to keep one, but the profit is derived not from any value attached to the record itself so much as the ease it gives to one's pen.

Remembering this function, he usually would cut himself off just when his thoughts were getting interesting; only on anniversaries, his birthday, and at New Year's did he permit himself long, reflective, although formal, entries.

These volumes, as L. H. Butterfield observes in his foreword, "document a slow

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starter's painfully slow start toward mastery of himself." Because they are part of the Adams saga, he correctly goes on to say, nothing in them can be without relevance. Yet, what one wants from Charles Francis is not less, but more: brevity is not what one looks for in an Adams. True, one could do without his faithful repetitions of the regular details of his similar days, but the chief disappointments with Charles come when he fails to convey information and observations that he certainly possessed. Thus, he had "a conversation with my father, the nature of which is not for this Journal." Other omissions were the result of genteel reserve so excessive that he hardly mentioned the existence of his daughter, except when worried over her illnesses, even though the rest of the family was struck by how much he "doated" over her. The chief omissions, however, were not the results of propriety, but of the excesses of repression that marked all of Charles's development in the years after his marriage. He made himself so much a slave to good sense that he was in danger of ceasing to find the world interesting, and his diary suffered from the resulting failure to record details. It is hard to find out at just what time of day anything occurred, just how long it took to make a trip, what people looked like, said and ate, and what Charles said in reply to them. He recorded how well he did at the debating society, but not what he said there, that he had a conversation with his wife, but not its subject, that he argued with Jared Sparks about the Revolution, but not what each one thought. "The dinner was as dinners usually are," he recorded after a family gathering, "good without anything remarkable." Such a view of the world is no doubt the most reasonable one to take, but it is crippling to a diary. A great diarist must believe that everything, not nothing, that happened to him was interesting.

When it came to John Quincy Adams, though, Charles's considerable insight and powers of observation were awakened. His keen eye for the old campaigner's foibles discovered a charming eccentricity that few contemporaries or later historians ever saw. Furthermore, Charles understood his father's impracticality in the ordinary affairs of life and saw past his Adams pose of distaste for public life to his youthfully eager yearning to get back into the fray. John Quincy Adams was indeed, as Charles observed, "overburdened" with leisure.

From Charles's record, there emerges also a surprising kindliness, humor and understanding in the father's dealings with his insistently critical, yet self-doubting and admiring son. When Charles arrived to visit—dour, full of his scholarship, desperately serious, and bent on getting into a literary discussion—John Quincy, an irritable man, needed much love to be as tolerant as he was. Of course, if one looks at his letters of advice solicited by Charles they may seem harsh by ordinary standards. But restraint was the Adams equivalent of kindness, since disapproval was expressed by denunciation. And so John Quincy Adams was being gentle when he countered Charles's disapproval of his political involvement with "the observation,"

> which has often occurred to me, and which your letter in pale ink . . . has freshened in my mind that there is something of the character of Hamlet in your composition. Your standard of morals is more elevated than belongs to the world in which we live and to the clay of which we are formed. . . . Apply if you please your inflexible measure of right and wrong . . . but . . . let down a little your scale of Virtue till its last step at least shall touch the earth.

Needless to say, for all their fellow feeling, father and son were not at ease with each other. What Charles recorded as purely physical headaches, nausea and vomiting came regularly when his father left for Washington in the fall and returned in the spring. The Adamses, it is clear, understood each other better than they did themselves.

They also worried as much about one another's standards as their own. Charles feared above all that his father did not always act under the eye of eternity, that he was "not proof against the temporary seductions of popular distinction." Thus, when John Quincy went into Congress, Charles concluded that "his is not the highest kind of greatness." On the other hand, he was continually "astonished," as he listened

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to his father's conversation, attended his Fourth of July orations, or came upon his youthful letters in the family collection, at his "warm and brilliant style," and at "the extent and reach of the acquisitions of my father." "The power of his mind," he concluded, "has no equal in this or perhaps any country." Charles was especially struck by his father's having written commentaries on the classics:

> How wonderful when I come to think of it, that in the midst of the heat of his Presidential situation he could find time and inclination to write such Letters. Is there another man like him at present in public life? Perhaps Mr. E. Everett, in point of acquirement, but in moral feeling not one.

Not only to have before him in the flesh the greatness of his father, and further testimonies of it in letters, speeches and publications, but also to have to compare himself with John and John Quincy Adams' far greater achievements at his age, was sufficient excuse for Charles's slow maturation. Indeed, he suffered under a greater burden of family greatness than his son, Henry Adams; for although Charles Francis eventually developed the overbearing Adams manner, he never became as imposing a figure as his own father had been.

The task of becoming an Adams which Charles Francis set for himself was a course in self-denial and perseverance that undoubtedly cost him more pain than his diary recorded. On the one hand, he accurately saw that he was less impetuous than his forebears: "My ambition is extensive but not of an extravagant kind," he noted. On the other hand, when he wrote: the "serious part of life has already set its hand upon me," he was feeling the loss of the Adams fire that he had possessed in his youth. Even as he counseled himself to "Patience and Coolness," and grew daily in the habits of regularity, he felt that he had killed that part of himself that was like his errant brother George. Like George, he once had been, he believed, a "sprightly" writer; now he had lost his verve in achieving regularity of expression. "The springy elasticity which distinguished me a year or two ago" was gone, and he began to think: "had [George and I] been able to form one character out of the advantageous portions of our two, Success would have been certain."

Yet Charles was not an unwilling convert. Nothing was more characteristic of the drama of his transformation than his remark that he had to "establish" his character because after George's death he was "the only Stock of an old House." In fact, his older brother, John Adams, the second, was alive and well and living in Washington at the time. Nevertheless, Charles's was the classical Adams course of self-denial, a course that was no less rigorous and painful—was, indeed, more so—for being self-imposed.

Perhaps nothing was more revealing of the kind of man Charles Francis Adams became than his remarks on the sermons he listened to and read each Sunday. He would often record on Monday morning how thoroughly he disliked that part of the sermon he had not slept through. He was moved one Sunday, however, by Mr. Young's sermon on vanity and ambition, the two sins an Adams most feared in himself, and he was struck by the weightiness of Massillon, whose book of sermons he read on Sunday afternoons, on the lure of worldly regard with its capacity to distract a man from his duty. He, of course, found Massillon at his "soundest" on the subject of wasting time. But the sermon that he read twice was on the prodigal son, "the younger son" who "wasted his substance with riotous living," but was forgiven after his "Repentance." Sustained by a similar myth of himself, Charles was able to survive the thinness of Boston culture, to pursue his program of self-improvement, and to approach his father with his attainments in repentance for his supposedly dissipated youth.

Father and son came together in real communion not in such moments as the discussion of Milton that Charles finally provoked but, judging from the rare strength of feeling that they always elicited, on their walks together to Penn's Hill on the family property in Quincy.

The spot had a romantic history (this was the same Merry Mount on which Thomas

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Morton and his followers had danced and disported themselves to the dismay of the Puritans); it had been a favorite ramble of John Adams, and it was still mostly wild. The one sustained passage in Charles's early diaries was his account of the three-day survey of the hill and surrounding land on which he accompanied his father. It was on Penn's Hill, or Mount Wollaston, that John Quincy Adams had set out his fruit trees in what Charles perceived to be an impractical, romantic gesture, and it was here that the repressed part of Charles's nature often surfaced. "I have from early associations in life felt a singular fondness for that scenery which by others is always considered wild and desolate," he wrote of it in the good eighteenth-century fashion, or, as the editor points out, the Byronic fashion, of romantic feeling. "It seems in some measure to harmonize with a particular tone of mind in me formerly cherished but now repressed which seeks melancholy for pleasure." The Mount Wollaston side of the Adamses was one that they successfully kept from the public and even from themselves. Now, as each volume in the Adams Papers project comes forward, we are permitted to see the hitherto unsuspected richness of character possessed by each member of this remarkable family.

Charles Francis Adams began by wanting "to make way for myself by a sudden leap to distinction," and ended by dedicating himself to restraint. But it was significant that in doing so he identified himself with his brother George. For if Charles was not the real prodigal son in the family, he did bring genuine rejoicing when he embraced the principles of his fathers.

The volumes of Charles Francis Adams' diary have been prepared by a new editor, Marc Friedlaender, who has contributed a new introduction to them. In it, he sets out the significant themes of his subject's life, each of which is later punctuated by the notes. It is these notes that supply all the detail omitted by Charles from the diary—his relationship with his father, as revealed by their letters; his feeling for his family, as revealed in his mother's diary; the actual tone of family and social events, as revealed in the diary of John Quincy Adams, who never tired of naming the guests, describing the appearances of people and things, or quoting himself and others. So persuasive are the notes (as when they make an event of Charles's first go at cataloging his grandfather's papers by pointing out that a great part of Charles's life work would be to edit the papers and write the biography that he so persistently urged on his father) that they become an essential part of the Adams record.

The Adams Papers project, in common with other historical editions like the Jefferson and Franklin papers, has not been, and cannot be, laid open to the charges recently leveled at literary projects like the Emerson and Melville papers. Lewis Mumford and Edmund Wilson could not allege here any of the unnecessary editorial devices, superfluous explanations, or other evidences of pedantry and lack of taste that they have complained of elsewhere. Charles's dashes, for example, which could have cluttered the page, have been cleaned up without any loss of his quality as a writer; and, although the editorial scholarship continues to be staggering (an appendix lists all the books borrowed by Charles from the Athenaeum; his account books are all correctly totted up in the notes—no doubt to the neglect of Friedlaender's own budget), it never seems to be obtrusive, never unnecessary scholarship. The editors are the true heirs of an important part of the family tradition initiated by Charles Francis Adams: its legacy of selfless and creative editorial scholarship.

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POETIC CLOSURE: A Study of How Poems End. *By Barbara Herrnstein Smith. University of Chicago Press. $9.75.*
Reviewed by REED WHITTEMORE

I was glad to have been a judge this last year when *Poetic Closure* won Phi Beta Kappa's Christian Gauss award. Literary criticism has not been delighting my soul much in recent years, but *Poetic Closure* was a pleasure; it suggested that there are still places the genre can go without giving in entirely to McLuhan or Peter Brook or other radicals pulling departments of English apart at the seams. Mrs. Smith emerges as a conservative critic essentially, that is, a critic who finds it significant that feelings and thoughts come in containers (to be fashionable, I should perhaps say that she finds form "relevant"). As a consequence her book should be a useful reference work for those who persevere in studying traditional forms, or in finding functional relationships between orderings and themes. At the same time she is sufficiently contemporary to take no particular forms as inevitable adjuncts to the poetic art. Like I. A. Richards forty years ago, she is interested in the psychological and physiological sources of our gratification by forms; and while she confesses right away that this is "an area where speculation is attractive but ignorance keeps pulling us up short," she nonetheless speculates precisely and well. In fact, if I were to search around for a felicitous phrase for the book's dust jacket, I think I would want something to the effect that her sensitivity to structural niceties is matched by the spaciousness of her vision of the meaning and importance of structure.

And what a good idea to concentrate upon endings! Nobody does. At least practically nobody. My life as a reader of poems in front of novices has persuaded me that the unwashed want to know why, where and how poems begin, not end; they want some quick vision of the creative impulse, but think that the conclusions of impulses are unimportant. Only professors wrestling with Aristotle, Shakespeare and *The Waste Land* worry about endings, and they tend to do so perfunctorily with a few words about catharsis or the new world's open-endedness.

Open-endedness interests me particularly, although I won't try to describe here the complications of Mrs. Smith's remarks. As I read her book, she is saying, to put it crudely, that open-endedness is something of a fraud. The big fuzzy aesthetic argument for it is that art and life live together better if art doesn't come to unlifelike resolutions as it sets out to be lifelike. Unfortunately, it never purported to *be* life, nor does yet. Resolutions remain firmly a part of the art game, part of the whole notion of form, part of our historical expectation of art. Hence irresolution in art, to be successful, needs to be viewed as simply another artistic convention, and one that, if looked at closely, will be seen always to obey a built-in rule of limits which says that while life goes on art stops. Its ways of stopping vary, but all artistic stops will be seen to partake of artistic principles of resolution. Hence things like happenings are closer to things like sonnets than the creators of happenings realize.

So, at least, I interpret Mrs. Smith; but her book, which I highly recommend, should be allowed to speak for itself.

✪ REED WHITTEMORE is professor of English at the University of Maryland and program associate at the National Institute of Public Affairs.

Men and Women of Courage

MEN IN DARK TIMES. *By Hannah Arendt. Harcourt, Brace & World. $5.95.*
Reviewed by ROBERT S. ROSEN

In this volume, Hannah Arendt has gathered together twelve pieces written over a period of about as many years and dealing with eleven persons. Although unlike one another in a great many respects, these

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Andre Gide

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eleven have had in common, the author tells us, the ability to shed some light "over the time span that was given them on earth."

All of these men and women, with the exception of Lessing, belong to the twentieth century. It is in the Lessing essay (originally delivered as an address when the author accepted the Lessing Prize of the Free City of Hamburg) that the term "dark times" is first introduced. The term, which derives from a Brecht poem, is used in the original German version to designate those not infrequent periods in history "in which the public realm has been obscured and the world become so dubious that people have ceased to ask any more of politics than that it show due consideration for their vital interests *(Lebensinteressen)* and their personal liberty *(Privatfreiheit)*."

Against the background of her own experiences as a Jew and an exile from Germany, Miss Arendt poses the question of what attitudes are proper in dark times, in which the temptation "to shift from the world and its public space to an interior life" is particularly great. Lessing here serves as the great example. Committed to the world although never at home in it, he shared with the ancients the belief that the essence of friendship and humanity consists in discourse, which humanizes the world and ourselves.

By focusing attention on the political relevance of friendship, Miss Arendt is able to illuminate the true meaning of friendship in Lessing's drama, *Nathan the Wise*. Nathan is wise because he is willing to sacrifice truth to friendship. Like the hero of his play, Lessing did not believe in the existence of an absolute truth. "A single absolute truth, could there have been one," Miss Arendt writes, "would have been the death of all those disputes in which the ancestor and master of all polemicism in the German language was so much at home and always took sides with utmost clarity and definiteness. And this would have spelled the end of humanity."

Excepting the essay on Lessing, the one on Walter Benjamin, which was written as an introduction to a collection of his essays, is the most successful. Walter Benjamin, who was born in Germany in 1892 and died a suicide at the Franco-Spanish border in September 1940, was haunted by bad luck throughout his life. Although not exactly unknown in his lifetime (he was the first to translate Proust and Saint-John Perse into German), he achieved a true measure of fame only after his death. The portrait of Benjamin is complete, touching on background material of the German-Jewish milieu from which he came, the conflict with the father, the difficulties of establishing himself as an *homme de lettres,* his peculiar brand of Marxism, his mania for collecting books and, more specifically, quotations, and finally his very genuine contributions to criticism. A distinguishing characteristic of Benjamin's work is the number of quotations. It was his ideal, in fact, to produce a work "consisting entirely of quotations . . . mounted so masterfully that it could dispense with any accompanying text . . ." His primary philosophical interest centered on language, which to him meant not the gift of speech, but "the world essence . . . from which speech arises." He understood language as an essentially poetic phenomenon, and his approach, says Miss Arendt, "decisive for all his literary studies . . . [was] not to investigate the utilitarian or communicative function of linguistic creations, but to understand them in their crystallized and thus ultimately fragmentary form as intentionless and noncommunicative utterances of a 'world essence.'"

The profile of Rosa Luxemburg appeared as a review of J. P. Nettl's definitive biography of 1966. The fascination that Rosa Luxemburg, the European revolutionist and political theorist, holds for Miss Arendt is understandable. Her review evokes the living person of this enigmatic figure, but adds little to Mr. Nettl's brilliant study of his subject, with which Miss Arendt agrees in all important respects.

In the profile, on the other hand, of Pope John XXIII, which was prompted by the posthumous publication of the Pontiff's

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diaries, Hannah Arendt is able to add substantially to the sparse outlines that the Pope left behind in his own writings. For "the single-mindedness of his faith, never troubled by doubt, never shaken by experience, never distorted by fanaticism . . . is splendid in deed and living word, but becomes monotonous and lame, a dead letter on the printed page." By means of anecdotes that circulated both inside and outside Rome but above all by shrewd analysis of his true strength, Hannah Arendt breathes life into the dead letter.

Isak Dinesen, the Danish author who wrote in English and began her literary career in her late forties, is the only woman besides Rosa Luxemburg presented in these pages. This essay also first appeared as a review of a biography, this one by Permenia Migel, with which Miss Arendt finds much fault. The circumstances of Isak Dinesen's life are recounted with great understanding. Hannah Arendt shows keen insight into the manner in which these circumstances were transformed into Isak Dinesen's stories.

There are two items on Karl Jaspers. One is a *laudatio* delivered in 1958 when the philosopher was awarded the German Peace Prize by the German Book Trade, the other appeared in *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers,* edited by P. A. Schilpp, 1957. Both pay tribute to the philosopher and the man who had been one of the author's teachers. To demonstrate the scope of Jaspers' philosophy of mankind, Hannah Arendt analyzes in some detail both Kant's concept of mankind and Hegel's notion of world history, which are its "proper traditional background." In Jaspers' concept of mankind, she sees combined "the depth of Hegel's historical experience with Kant's great political wisdom. Yet what distinguishes Jaspers from both is decisive. He believes neither in the 'melancholy haphazardness' of political action and the follies of recorded history nor in the existence of a secret cunning force that manipulates man into wisdom. He has abandoned Kant's concept of a 'good will' which, because it is grounded in reason, is incapable of action. He has broken with both the despair and the consolation of German idealism in philosophy."

An important element of Jaspers' humane philosophy is the concept of "limitless communication." Indeed he conceives of truth and communication as one and the same within the "existential" realm. "Truth . . . cannot be conceived outside communication. . . . Only in communication—between contemporaries as well as between the living and the dead—does truth reveal itself."

The greatest demands on the reader are made in the very detailed analysis of Hermann Broch's complex theories, which was written as an introduction to the two volumes of essays by the Austrian novelist, published in 1955 (four years after his death). While there are scattered references to the novels, the essay deals overwhelmingly with Broch's ideas on epistemology and finally the "earthly absolute" in which he put his "ultimate faith."

The author's reflections on Bertold Brecht deal primarily with questions of the poet's responsibility. Her avowed purpose is to present the thesis that "a poet's real sins are avenged by the gods of poetry." Brecht's greatest sin seems to have been a very ill-advised "Ode to Stalin," written while he was in East Berlin, and it was in East Berlin, in the last years of his life, that Brecht lost his gift for poetry.

The sketches of Waldemar Gurian and Randall Jarrell first appeared as memorial pieces. In the essay on Gurian, who is not likely to be known to very many readers, Hannah Arendt stresses that courage was his most marked characteristic (as indeed it is characteristic of all the men and women the author has brought together here). The author reminds us that the ancients viewed courage "as the political virtue par excellence. Courage, understood in the fullest sense of its many meanings, probably drove him [Gurian] into politics, which may appear bewildering in a man whose original passion was doubtless for ideas and whose deepest concern was clearly the conflicts of the human heart."

Gurian's concern for the unfortunates of the world, which Hannah Arendt lovingly

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re-creates, was combined with a strong sense of reality. "His whole spiritual existence was built on the decision never to conform and never to escape, which is only another way of saying that it was built on courage."

Randall Jarrell, the subject of the concluding essay, has the distinction of being the only American of the group included in Hannah Arendt's book. It is a delightful portrait she draws of their friendship, revealing a great deal about the man who "would have been a poet if he had never written a single poem." For all his vulnerability, Randall Jarrell did not withdraw from the world. Although his poetic nature aligned him with what Jarrell himself referred to as "the happy few, who grow fewer and unhappier day by day," his commitment, like Lessing's, was to the world. It is perhaps because of the tension of this inner struggle and the enormous price it exacted from him, that we feel Miss Arendt's warm admiration for the man who launched himself, as he felt he had to do, into the world with "nothing to protect him . . . but his splendid laughter, and the immense naked courage behind it."

Personal courage, compassion for the helpless, a commitment to the world—these are the qualities Hannah Arendt's subjects share with one another, and the source of "the uncertain, flickering and often weak light" they were able to kindle in their lives.

Urban Problems Aired

THE URGENT FUTURE. *By Albert Mayer. McGraw-Hill. $16.50.*

Reviewed by BRITTON HARRIS

There appears to be a general agreement that our cities, and indeed most of the cities of the world, are in trouble, and that remedial action is urgently needed. At the same time, however, concrete consideration of the issues leads one to doubt that there is much consensus as to the precise nature of these difficulties, their root causes, or the main paths out of them. The work at hand provides a fascinating case study both of certain social and emotional issues that surround the amelioration of the urban condition, and of the confusion and communication difficulties that surround the search for solutions.

The author of *The Urgent Future,* Albert Mayer, has had a long and distinguished career as an architect and planner, having been associated at times with a number of the giants of community planning, and having independently made his own considerable contributions—for instance, to the early stages of the planning of Chandigarh, new capital of the Punjab in India. The present volume represents a summing-up of some of his most strongly held views with respect to planning and cities in the United States. These views are presented in 175 pages of text and pictures, more or less in the format of a book of art or photography. We must examine the cogency and impact of this summation.

As a world civilization, Western society does not appear to have done very well in foreseeing, recognizing and dealing with the problems of large-scale urbanism. At the same time, however, one cannot help but wonder, first, whether there is not too much of a professionally centered view among architects and city planners that places these problems incorrectly at the center of modern society. Surely, for example, conditions in American cities are by and large greatly superior to urban conditions of the late nineteenth century and to urban conditions throughout the world today except for a few showplaces of northwestern Europe. It is even plain, in cities like Hong Kong and Singapore, that immensely overcrowded urban conditions do not kill the human spirit or necessarily lead to social and political instability. Surely, also on a worldwide basis, the highest priorities for social action revolve around the potentiality for international armed conflict, the existence of starvation and overpopulation in the less developed nations, racial conflict in the United States and elsewhere, and a host of problems regarding the long-term social

BRITTON HARRIS is a professor of city and regional planning at the University of Pennsylvania.

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and intellectual development of our society. Of all the most pressing issues that face us, only two, and these to a limited extent, can be primarily associated with the city as such: these are racial conflict and the pollution of the environment.

Given this professional preoccupation with urban problems, it is quite natural to find also the second difficulty, which is a professional bias in the proposed solutions. Granted that urban problems are indeed far from trivial (even if not of first priority), it is by no means established that the provision of new towns, new housing, new parks, and renewed neighborhoods will indeed solve the problems that have been identified. And even if these remedies, liberally applied, would in fact solve many of the difficult problems, it is by no means assured that these solutions are necessarily either the most economical or the most socially desirable.

I therefore approach Albert Mayer's airing of urban problems and of their solutions with a certain initial skepticism, which I am sure is more than occasionally shared by administrators, legislators and private citizens who are confronted with decisions as to public policy. The demands of fully articulated programs for ameliorating urban conditions appear very high in relation to many other societal needs—even at better controlled levels of defense expenditures. For these citizens in so many different walks of life, a realistic discourse going to the real issues and laying a basis for hard decisions is absolutely essential. Mayer's book both contributes to such a discourse and in some ways makes it more difficult.

I find it necessary to start by discussing some of these difficulties. Not the least of these is the "undemocratic" price of $16.50, which seems excessive for the number of pages and the quality of preparation of the book. More important, both the text and the illustrations present frequent barriers to communication. Even the title is on the verge of being illogical and confusing, and the book abounds in neologisms and bizarre constructions which sometimes intensify but more frequently becloud the author's meaning. Similarly, in a book that consists perhaps half of illustrations, one finds many completely wasted pages, others that can communicate only with the skilled professional, and still others that may or may not communicate the author's meaning to anyone, including the average citizen. These shortcomings in communication are most unfortunate, considering the interest and importance of the imperatives that the author attempts to convey.

Those things that Mayer understands well and knows in detail from experience are well treated and well developed in this book, although sometimes in a somewhat scattered and disorganized fashion. These are the importance of treating the development of the land more or less as a public utility, the importance of public housing, the nature of neighborhood planning as a basis for "decentralized excellence," the role of parks and open space, and the role of new towns. These types of policy measures and their part in making the metropolis more amenable are developed with many photographs (some charming and some inane), and with an enthusiastic text.

It is one of the great paradoxes of modern city planning that many of these traditional and honestly conceived measures have, on the one hand, never been fully applied and yet already possess, on the other hand, an air of old-fashioned inappropriateness. Despite Mayer's zeal and good taste, he does not show any real understanding of the technologies and problems of environmental control or of metropolitan transportation. Neither does he give any clear indication of how, as a matter of public policy, we could achieve new cities as amenable as Zurich, which he cites as an ideal example.

Lest these remarks be taken as too harsh a criticism of Mayer, let me hasten to add that his proposals put him in general far ahead of those time-serving administrators who wish only to solve today's crisis and paint over the cracks in the facade. While every thinking person should in one way or another assimilate the thoughts and the imperatives that Mayer lays before us, they are in themselves not enough. We should each think through anew the true nature

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of the urban crisis, its importance, and the goals for metropolis that we regard as essential. We should ponder the difficulties of communication between different disciplines and different points of view, and the real difficulties of conflict of interest and limited resources that face our society. All of these issues arise out of a consideration of Mayer's book. Unfortunately, the difficulties appear to arise as much by example as by discussion, and persist in the reader's mind almost as clearly as the author's positive contributions.

1968 ΦBK Science Award

GREAT WATERS: A Voyage of Natural History to Study Whales, Plankton, and the Waters of the Southern Ocean. *By Sir Alister Hardy. Harper & Row. $10.95.*
Reviewed by NATHAN REINGOLD

The title is out of the last century, the voyage was in a wooden sailing vessel, and even the author's name brings to mind Scoresby, Ross and Franklin. But Hardy lives, and he sailed to the Southern Ocean in 1925-27 as Chief Zoologist on the *Discovery* in which Scott first went to the Antarctic in 1901-03. Even the nature of the text is reminiscent of the Victorians. By embedding his diary and drawings of the voyage in a retrospective narrative, Hardy slips easily from past to present. One moment we stand with him on deck, overwhelmed with awe at new creatures brought up from the deep; at the next we learn of the later intellectual history of these species. The book is devoid of any literary guiles. Yet even where Hardy loses himself in a joyous frenzy of naming species, the nonzoologist will understand the passion of the author.

Why *Great Waters* is so intrinsically interesting to lay readers is a problem in the domains both of literature and science. On the surface the book is a tale of travel and adventure. We accompany the author to strange places; see whaling, post-Melville and pre-factory ship; survive a storm south of Cape Horn; and marvel at the wonders of nature. But there is just too much science for a tale of adventure, and this not mere intrusion in the narrative. *Great Waters* does not fit into any of the obvious categories of books on science normally palatable to nonscientists. It is not a popularization—in our day typically a trivialization covered by a slick patina of human interest. Nor is it a work attracting readers by showing that scientists are "human" after all, in the manner of Snow and Watson—"human" meaning that scientists fear, love, hate, just like poets, bartenders and historians. Except for the few splendid chapters in which Hardy integrates the life cycles and evolution of whales and plankton with their physical environment, *Great Waters* lacks the sense of the cosmic that attracts some readers, for example, to publications on the origins of the universe (Hoyle, Jeans, Eddington).

At least as early as the eighteenth century, the scientific literature was accused of being too narrowly intense, its treatment a mere abstract of the incredible richness and diversity of reality. Complaints of this nature continue to this day. While other areas of human knowledge have developed bodies of literature with similar attributes, no one seems to mind very much. (Try marshaling a concern for two cultures after reading legal opinions.) As much of the literature of science consists of words peculiar to it and of mathematical symbols, the feeling of remoteness from the ordinary reader's reality is intensified. Because most educated Westerners consider themselves in or part of whatever it is that science treats, the sense of remoteness from this literature has had serious intellectual consequences. Reinforcing these consequences is the belief in the previous existence of a single culture in which the arts, science and humanities were coextensive. Although scientists were often denoted as "literary gentlemen" as late as the 1830's, the idea of "one culture" may very well be as mythical as the concept of

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the Noble Savage. After all, there were always the separate cultures of the educated and of the masses. Only the rash would assume that all of science was open to all the educated. Neither Newton nor Ptolemy is light reading. The complaints had some justification; science did not literally reproduce the raw reality of our perceptions but yielded very complex abstractions with a most subtle relationship to these perceptions.

Hardy's book seems an exception to the norm of scientific literature for two reasons. It is essentially about a place—the Southern Ocean—that is discussed in terms of a wide variety of physical and biological factors. Because our knowledge of these topics is still limited, Hardy cannot generalize too much from the particulars he encountered. We get the direction of winds, the color of fish, the smell of whale carcasses, and the chemical compositions of the waters—in lieu of a mathematically elegant equation. (The space program may very well yield similar products.) Science still cannot deal too successfully with the complexities of place. When a major practical problem appears involving place, like environmental pollution, what facts and concepts we have prove inadequate.

The second reason stems from the anachronistic nature of the text. By the last third of the past century, scientific norms decreed a depersonalization of the literature. But here we get Hardy—enthusiastic, fallible, shrewd—engaging in the very personal process by which scientists develop their fields. Much of the successful development of the sciences stems from the insistence on excluding from the research literature all matter not rigorously essential to the subject. Not only were peripheral topics excluded but also the actual scientist and the particulars of his research environment. The virtues of these exclusions are fairly obvious; personal and sectarian squabbles were minimized. But the price was high. The scientist became invisible, appearing occasionally in works of hagiography. And the methods of science were confused with the much different rationalizations philosophers (and scientists) committed after the

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fact. Hardy has not quite mastered the doctrine and still intrudes upon the data, much to the benefit of this book.

Something for Everyone

THE AGES OF LIFE. *By Lorus J. Milne and Margery Milne. Harcourt, Brace & World. $6.95.*

Reviewed by MARSTON BATES

We are born. We grow at a varying but predictable pace until we reach adult size, after which our bodies undergo a series of changes leading eventually to senility and finally to death. What does this mean? What factors control the sequence of events? These are questions that the Milnes have set out to explore in the light of the most recent discoveries of medicine and physiology. Their primary focus is on man, but they draw on the rest of the living world for illustration and comparison.

The Milnes are fond of statistics, which they use liberally and intelligently. They start, for instance, with the curious fact that the largest human babies are born to peoples of the smallest race, the Pygmies of the African Ituri Forest. "An average Pygmy girl is 8.6 pounds at birth, and grows to only about six times this weight to attain full size." In Anglo-America, on the other hand, the average weight of babies at birth is 7.4 pounds—while "Oriental children are smaller by nearly three-quarters of a pound."

The nature and rate of growth, of course, depend on a sequence of chemical processes governed by the genetic material; and the Milnes jump from the human fetus to viruses and bacteria to explain briefly what we know about the way in which DNA molecules "code" the information necessary for determining growth and form. With this as background, the authors can go on to survey general aspects of the natural history of growth—and of birth and death.

✪ MARSTON BATES's most recent book is *Gluttons and Libertines: Human Problems of Being Natural.*

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They come up with all sorts of fascinating oddments of information.

Man, it seems, is the longest lived of any mammal. His nearest rivals are African elephants, donkeys, hippopotamuses and Indian rhinoceroses, all with an average life-span of about forty years. The average human life-span, of course, has varied greatly over the years, lengthening steadily with the development of medicine and the improvement of living conditions. At present for white Americans, life expectancy at birth is 67.3 years for males, 73.9 years for females. In some twenty countries life is less hazardous for people than it is in the United States: with Norway offering the most favorable conditions for survival.

Life-span statistics on wild animals are scarce, and records of animals in captivity are often unreliable. It is clear, however, that a few kinds of birds, reptiles and fishes equal or exceed the human average. To me, the longevity of hummingbirds is particularly curious, considering the fast pace of their lives. The Milnes quote five years as the maximum for our rubythroat in the wild; but Augusto Ruschi, the Brazilian expert, has kept one species for as long as fourteen years. The Milnes suggest that this longevity may be explained by the great drop in hummingbird metabolic rate during their nightly sleep.

Aside from man, the best records of length of life are for domesticated animals. With dogs, it turns out that the smaller breeds have a longer life expectancy than the larger ones. This seems to be due not so much to absolute size, as to the higher proportion of brain weight to body weight. Similarly, "ponies have a larger brain in comparison to body size than do large horses, and sometimes live to be 40 years old, whereas 34 is extraordinary for a horse." The Milnes quote a colleague as remarking that if longevity is the goal, "it is an advantage to have a brain, and a disadvantage to have a body." Man's longevity, then, may be related somehow to his proportionately large brain.

The modern prolongation of human life-span depends largely on the great reduction of infectious disease as an agent of death

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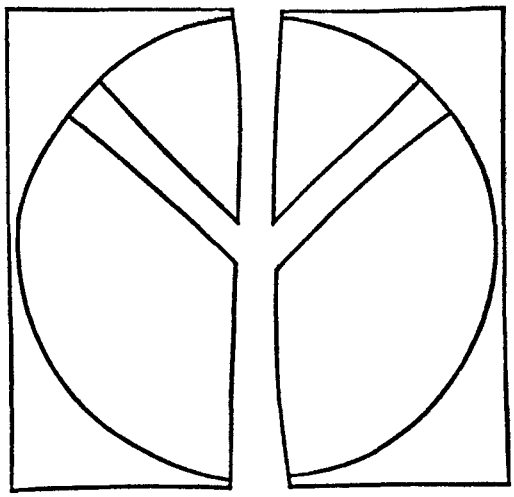

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in infancy and adolescence. The leading causes of death now are cardiovascular disease and cancer; sixty years ago they were infant diarrhea and tuberculosis. What is the likelihood of further extension of life-span? According to the National Center for Health Statistics, cardiovascular-renal diseases accounted for fifty-five percent of all deaths in the United States in 1965; if these could be eliminated, the Milnes calculate that almost ten years would be added to the average life-span. "Conquering cancer, the second-greatest cause of death (16 percent), would extend life less than two years for men, and less than three for women." It seems unlikely, then, that medicine will provide any startling extension of maximum life, although probably more and more people will be able to live to a ripe old age.

The Milnes discuss at some length the events that characterize human aging, and their probable cause. The skin becomes wrinkled—and the skin of women tends to wrinkle more easily than that of men. Special cells in the hair follicles cease to produce pigment and the hair becomes white. "Our sense of taste fades, and we are likely to put more sugar in our food." The sense of smell deteriorates. The eyes lose their ability to change focus quickly, and we detect less and less of the violet end of the spectrum as we grow older. Our hearing fails: perception is lowering eighty vibrations per second every six months by the time we are forty. We get shorter because the cartilaginous discs of the vertebral column become thinner. The quantity of blood pumped by the heart decreases steadily and the efficiency of the ventilating system of the lungs diminishes. "Like old chickens, we get tough." The brain, too, loses weight each year past middle age—but presumably we more than compensate for this by way of added experience.

Other organisms also go through changes as they age, which has led to extensive study of methods of determining the age of different kinds of animals and plants. Best known are the tree ring studies. The scales of many fishes also show marks of annual growth; and much can be learned from mol-

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lusk shells and the lime deposits of corals. There are a number of odd ways of determining the age of particular kinds of animals—with whales, for instance, by measuring the waxy ear plugs.

Those of us who are approaching senility can thus learn a lot about ourselves (and other creatures) from this survey by the Milnes. As for younger people—they can find out something about what they will presently be in for. Thus there is something for everyone.

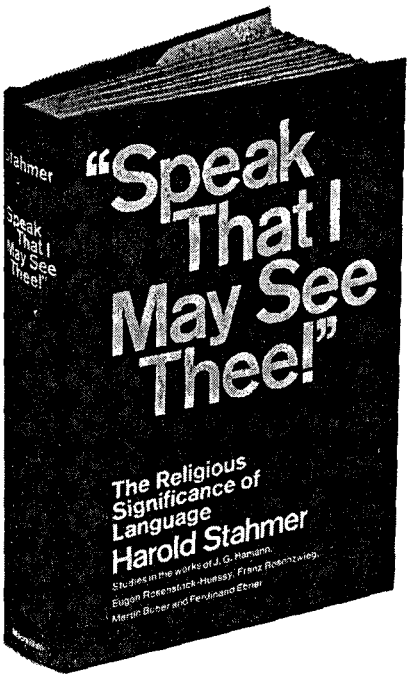
1968 Ralph Waldo Emerson Award

WHITE OVER BLACK: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812. *By Winthrop P. Jordan. Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press. $12.50.*

Reviewed by JOEL WILLIAMSON

In the fall of 1954 in a series of lectures at the University of Virginia, C. Vann Woodward inaugurated, for our times, a new field in American history. In those lectures and in the book that followed, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow,* he came about to face squarely the vital question of what has been the history of race relations in this land. Admittedly, other scholars and especially sociologists had labored previously in that area. Admittedly, also, historians of Negro life could hardly avoid a chapter or a section or scattered paragraphs on interracial contacts. Still, the great majority of historians working the white side of the color line dealt with race relations only briefly if at all. In historical writing, segregated life seemed to breed segregated scholarship. But in the fall of

✪ Since 1960 JOEL WILLIAMSON has been on the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, until 1965 as an instructor in modern civilization, and subsequently as an assistant and associate professor specializing in Southern history. He has published *The Negro in South Carolina During Reconstruction, 1861-1877,* and a book of readings, *The Origins of Segregation.*



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1954 a generation of change was seeking definition, and Professor Woodward, with the studious sensitivity that is his genius, gave it definition.

After a peculiar and significant hiatus, other historians have journeyed into the "New World" of race relations. Interestingly, the first voyages were tentatively made, as if the *voyageurs* did not intend to spend their lives in that realm. Explorers rather than conquistadors, they reached gingerly into the hinterland of race relations to touch some Southern cities, one Southern state during Reconstruction, another afterward, abolition and race relations in the North, and several quick trips into the Revolutionary era and into the early colonial period. And now, in one magnificent, bold thrust, Winthrop Jordan has traveled across the terra incognita to the far end of this land and beyond to a point where there were no relations between Negroes and English Americans. In *White Over Black* he has returned to tell us what he has seen.

Like many superambitious endeavors in intellectual history, this work transits an attitudinal topography that will always remain imperfectly charted. Inevitably, the reader will wonder, as the author anticipated, why he wrote about the things he did rather than the things one would have him write about. Other routes could be pressed through the same area and other books could be written on the same subject. But it is enough, I think, that Professor Jordan's interests are well within sight of the interests of others, and the data he offers is so massive that every reader can write his own book as he absorbs this one.

I would be inclined to great suspicion and to rely less upon this volume as a keystone in our understanding of racial relations in America if the author had not done such a vast quantity of research, or if he were not so obviously brilliant, or if he were not fully engaged in the seeming realities of his subject. But he has done and he is all of these things. Furthermore, what he sees is neither simple, nor static, nor does he pretend that his material is

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wholly susceptible to neatly rational analysis. On the basis of what I know of the same subject in a later period, this suggests strongly to me that Winthrop Jordan's wheels are not ones that turn in the air and move only one another, but rather move upon the earth and are engaged with the stuff that seems to me to be life. In brief, I value the artist, and I believe his work.

Professor Jordan disclaimed any presentist polemical purpose in his writing, but the book that I read carries a momentous message for a people who seem to be drifting again into a new doldrums in Negro-white relations. Racial attitudes played the leading role in creating Negro slavery for English America; racial attitudes created the relatively less physical and quietly insidious slavery that followed nominal emancipation and Reconstruction; and today racial attitudes might again create still another and more subtle variety of slavery for the Negro in America. Liberal Americans have assumed in the last decade and a half that a revolution in interracial behavior would bring about a revolution in attitudes. It has been supposed that putting black bodies next to white bodies in massive numbers and on terms of official equality, enforced where necessary by beans if not by bayonets, relegated attitudes, opinions and ideas to their proper sphere of weightlessness. If contacts between the races could be wholly and rigidly controlled for a generation or more, perhaps such results might indeed be realized. But the values of our total society preclude such gigantic stringency now only somewhat less than the values of Northern society did in the first racial reconstruction attempted a century ago. Increasingly as liberal America finds that she cannot deliver the interracial behavior she has promised, she will fall back to asking for at least parity in consideration for popular ideas, attitudes and (descending the scale) opinions historically as well as presently defined. I, personally, would give the mental realm of race relations some degree of priority, and I think that the thrust of *White Over Black* supports that preference.

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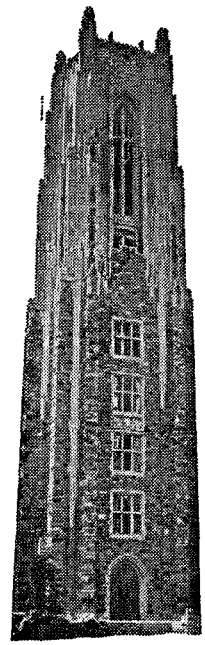

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The Reader Replies . . . . . .

THE READER REPLIES *carries miscellaneous comments by readers and authors on various articles that have appeared in the magazine. All communications should be addressed to: Editor,* THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, *1811 Q Street, N.W., Washington, D. C. 20009. Because of space limitations we cannot guarantee to print all letters received.*
—EDITOR

"Columbia has been a distinguished university these many decades because it has been doing *some* things right," Richard Hofstadter says in the course of his very eloquent Commencement Address, printed in your Autumn, 1968, issue—and I do not doubt that it is true. But I wonder if it is not just those things which the university has been doing right that have got it into trouble, rather than, as Mr. Hofstadter implies, some other things which have been done wrong.

Most academic people would assume, I think, that among the things which have been done right, at Columbia and elsewhere, are the graduate, professional, and research activities that constitute the chief preoccupation of the modern university, providing as they do the standard by which it measures its importance. Yet these as much as anything else are what create the atmosphere—the lack of disinterestedness, the complacence, the impersonality—which the students so bitterly protest. And I do not see how the protest can be expected to subside if we suppose, as a number of people clearly do suppose, that what is required is only that we purge such activities of certain incidental flaws, while we leave them essentially unchallenged. It does no good to amend our failures when we are opposed on the ground of our success.

The problem is thought to be political, but it is intellectual—it has to do with the kind of education we are providing at present, and the kind we aren't providing. The kind we aren't providing, or that we aren't providing very well, is the liberal education that would allow us to *be* political with respect to the graduate and professional studies which have everywhere taken the field. Without this kind of education we cannot govern these studies, as we should, because we do not know how to weigh either the skills they teach or the purposes they serve. Hence their tendency to become runaway technologies, inflated and irresponsible in their pride and power. We are no more able to assist their growth intelligently than we might be soberly to oppose it. We can only play along, as we do, while our politics becomes a scramble, at once savage and boring, for resources which are never denied except from the fact that they are limited. Nor do we even question the results of this procedure, but seem content to believe that what's good for physics—or anthropology, or English—is good for the university, and we call the system academic freedom, although what we mean is merely *laissez faire*.

In these circumstances it is rather grimly fitting that some of the more militant student groups have taken to playing their own games with university facilities. There is an element of parody in such performances, which is not quite free from malice, as there is recognition, by no means free of rage. And while I don't myself like the fact that at Columbia the situation was used by certain student leaders for what they were pleased to regard as their larger revolutionary purposes, still that does not invalidate the better reasons found by others for their discontent.

The question is whether this discontent is rightly focused when it seeks a greater amount of control, or at least of participation, in university politics. It would be rash to reject the idea utterly, even if matters had not got beyond the point where that would be allowed. In fact, some real student involvement is probably required to keep the schools from going back to sleep, quite apart from the positive good that may accrue from it. And yet I do not think, I dare say no one thinks, that such an involvement will by itself accomplish very much. On the contrary, those of us who teach and those who learn will alike be badly served if it becomes, as in the current fascination with pressure politics of every kind it threatens to become, the main student objective, and the main university concession. For as I do not think the problem is primarily a political one, so I do not think the solution can be political, in

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the sense of emerging from a revision of the academic structure.

Academic freedom, like civil liberty, is permissive, but it is not enabling. We have to learn to govern ourselves, in the university as well as out of it. I think this means more than merely acquiring experience through the exercise of power, although doubtless that is indispensable. It means there has to be a commitment, if not to the "utopian scheme for a perfect university," which Mr. Hofstadter warns us to avoid, then at all events to some conception of our common academic good. More, it means there must be sufficient competence in the liberal arts among us to insure that our interests and our programs are examined for their adherence to this end. Neither of these conditions is likely to be met without some change in our intellectual habits, as distinct from our political practice. The first requires a measure of trust in the intellect itself, a willingness to invoke ideas despite our fear that they may turn into ideologies. The second implies a reconsideration of what we do and how we do it in all our disciplines. This is obviously a long-term endeavor, the consequences of which I don't pretend I can foresee. Yet I don't accept that it must weaken or debase the academic enterprise by making us accountable to some sort of revolutionary academic tribunal. We must be accountable to ourselves, as we assuredly are not when none among us knows what the rest are up to, and when our only common bond is a tacit agreement to let each other alone. Nor do I see any reason why the students, who for the most part give evidence of the greatest generosity and devotion, should be excluded from the search for a way in which accountability may be achieved, providing they accept their ignorance at the outset, as we must accept ours.

I will only add that, in expressing myself thus, I do not like to disagree with Mr. Hofstadter, among whose former students I am glad to count myself, and whose partisan I find I nearly always am on other occasions. But perhaps the disagreement between us is not so great as I suppose, and as so long a letter as this must inevitably tend to make it sound.

JOHN VAN DOREN
Cambridge, Massachusetts

MR. HOFSTADTER replies: In this age of heated ideological debate and malicious misrepresentation one has to be grateful for a critic who writes in John Van Doren's spirit. But I am not sure that I understand all of what he is saying or agree with very much of it.

The fundamental point on which I do agree is Mr. Van Doren's desire to see graduate and professional education and research informed, and in a measure controlled, by the spirit of liberal education. I am uncertain as to how he proposes to attain this objective, and I think he is wrong in his estimate of its relation to current student discontent. There have been, of course, complacence and impersonality and other serious failures in the universities. Students have some legitimate grievances; they often make valuable suggestions; and their inclusion, in some reasonable measure, in the work of managing universities and colleges may in the end help bring some improvements. Some students, activists and others, are genuinely concerned with what I would call the intellectual issues of higher education.

But I am convinced that Mr. Van Doren is profoundly mistaken if he thinks that the fundamental force behind student activism—or, for that matter, most parallel faculty activism—is intellectual. It is indeed political and not intellectual, not even academic; and its effect, if not its intention, is to subordinate the universities and the educational process to external political ends. The universities are under attack only marginally and incidentally for their real faults but essentially for their virtues. They are under attack because they are free, accessible, liberal—and, one must add, vulnerable. Those who are seizing offices and buildings and disrupting classes are not seekers for more of the spirit of liberal education like Mr. Van Doren, but hard-boiled political activists who see the universities as pawns in a bigger and more important game and are willing (a few are eager) to risk wrecking them in the pursuit of objectives that have little to do directly with educational values.

The extent of Mr. Van Doren's misconception of the situation is measured for me by his suggestion that student involvement is needed "to keep the schools from going back to sleep." The schools are not in danger of going to sleep just now. They are in danger of being agitated to death.

* * *

I can't resist telling you that the Winter SCHOLAR is the most stimulating issue that I have received in my many years as a subscriber. It brightened the Christmas holidays.

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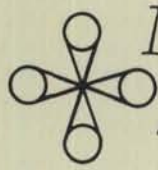

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